

REWARDS
of
READING
FRANK L. MOTT

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REWARDS OF READING

BY
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NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

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PRINTED IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO
DAVID C. MOTT
AND
MARY E. MOTT

PREFACE

No doubt there is too much reading-matter in the world. And people somewhere, somehow, must read all these printed things; so there is doubtless far too much reading in the world. Yet, recognizing this surplusage, I am in this little volume not only adding some pages to the grand total of reading-matter, but even using those pages to urge people to read! This seems to require a little explaining.

The "too much" to which I have referred represents, of course, an excess of books, magazines, and papers which have little or no value. Now, the reason that our presses busy themselves with such things is to be found, certainly, in the demand for them; and the only possibility that I can see for making any headway against this demand and the unhealthful appetite from which it springs is to direct readers more and more toward worthier books. Bad reading is of two kinds: that which fails through error of aim, because it wastes time upon unrewarding literature; and that which fails through error of method, because it wastes effort through ignorance of how to read. This little book attempts to correct these two kinds of bad reading, not by attacking them, but by giving the seeker after rewards in literature some few hints upon both where and how he may find other and

higher standards for his reading. The justification of these chapters lies in what may be called the economics of reading: the time and money one spends in reading should be made to pay the largest possible dividends.

Two themes will be found to run through the various chapters of this book: first, reading must be *enjoyed* if it is to be worth much; and second, all good reading is very *personal*—it is personal as regards both the author who puts himself into the writing of it and the reader who puts himself into its perusal. These two principles seem to me to be basic in good reading.

Of course my little essays in appreciation will be very idle indeed if they do not incite to a reading of the literature which they suggest. At the end of each of them I have placed a list of books. These lists are only suggestive. They are not lists of my own favorites, nor of books for a course of study; but they are books that I have thought my readers might learn to care for. Probably the lists are too long; it is difficult to keep such things within bounds. I would not have anyone work through all, or even one, of these lists. I am mindful of the Senecan warning against scattered reading; it is better to read a single book which affords one a real emotional or intellectual experience than to read a thousand merely to be able to say one has read them. But I bid you take the book-lists, and take all this book, to make what use of it you can to the end that your reading may be rich in rewards.

It gives me pleasure to express my gratitude

to my friends Hardin Craig and John T. Frederick, for their suggestions in regard to the several essays here printed, and to the Reverend E. T. Gough, Miss Bessie L. Pierce, and Miss Helen Williams for favors in connection with various phases of the work.

F. L. M.

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REWARDS OF READING

I. INTRODUCTION

THERE is one class of readers for whom these little essays in literary appreciation will have no value whatever: here I post a warning at the very gateway. Readers who insist upon *studying* literature, laboring over an "Ode to a Grecian Urn" with an analytical fine-tooth comb: *Cave!* This is not for them. The first aim of the reading to which these essays hope to direct you is enjoyment: get enjoyment and the rest shall be added unto you. Unless you are willing to enter upon your reading in a spirit of intelligent pleasure-seeking, unless you will set out with me upon a light-hearted but sincere quest for delights of the noblest kinds, you would do better not to follow these chapters or read the books on my lists. Ours is to be, I hope, a happy and zestful exploring party bent upon a fascinating search for treasure. Sincerity will be necessary, and originality, and persistence, and sharpness of apprehension; but they will be well repaid, for the treasure we seek is an abiding one. It is the enjoyment of literature.

Those who see something wrong in æsthetic delight as an end and goal will, obviously, find little sympathy here. I hold with old Michel Montaigne:

"If one shall tell me that it is to degrade the Muses to make use of them only for sport and to pass away the

time, I shall tell him that he does not know the value of that sport and pastime so well as I do. . . . ”

But I do not mean to depreciate pleasures that are not purely æsthetic. Just what the difference in nature between æsthetic enjoyment and that which comes from mental effort may be, does not seem to me a matter of great moment. Shall we say how much of the pleasure that comes from considering a proposition of Euclid arises from a feeling for its mathematical perfection, and how much from a kind of glow resulting from the mental gymnastic of solving it? Shall we say how much of the pleasure of reading Browning or Meredith is intellectual, arising from mental effort; and how much is moral, arising from the contemplation of Truth; and how much is æsthetic, arising from the vision of pure Beauty? Let us be content with realizing that these are all pleasures, and all legitimate rewards to be sought after, and all profitable.

Moreover, we seek enjoyment in literature because we know that the quality that sets literature off from mere writing for information is its power to please. We know that all writers of literary importance have aimed to please their readers, and we wish to know if they can please us. We wish to give them the opportunity. Therefore the essays of this volume have enjoyment as a direct goal: we shall try to discover some of the delights that books have for us.

This means that your reading must be exceedingly personal to *you*. Its success will depend upon what you find of pleasure. “Let us love

the books that please us," says Jules Lemaître, the great French critic. "Let's stop worrying about classifications and schools." Literature cannot be taught; I doubt whether any teacher can do more than teach some facts *about* literature. As for its essence, as for the refreshing, cultural, educating delight in literature, every reader must discover that for himself; and if I can help point the way to such a discovery I shall be very happy.

Jack London was fond of saying that the two great words in the English language were *I like*. Certainly they are important words in reading. Moreover, unless the reader is a very small person indeed, they are not narrowing or self-centering words. "The universe of books is such a very large and various universe," says G. Stanley Lee in that very stimulating series of essays on education which he calls *The Lost Art of Reading*, "—a universe in which so much that one likes can be brought to bear at any given point, that reading as one likes is almost always safe in it. There is always more of what one likes than one can possibly read. And it is impossible to like any one thing deeply without discovering a hundred other things to like with it. One is infallibly led out. If one touches the universe vitally at one point, all the rest of the universe flocks to it. It is the way a universe is made."

A prime requirement of such a quest as ours, then, is deference to our own tastes and judgment—the maintenance of our own literary self-respect. Don't sell yourself into slavery to any critic under heaven. Criticism is no exact science. You

have a right to your own opinion. If you think "Eddie" Guest a greater poet than John Keats, say so by all means—until you learn better. But you will not really learn better by merely taking somebody else's word for it. Tradition is a terrific force, for evil as well as for good, and it sometimes discourages the honest search for treasures which will be real treasures for yourself. We pedagogues are often "blind guides": don't trust us far. Rely on *your* tastes, *your* feelings, *your* judgment. "Till I die I will not put away my integrity," said Job, and that is the way he saved his soul. So you may save yours: hold fast your integrity.

But with this honesty of judgment there may well be a studied catholicity. Intolerance, wholesale idol-smashing, reckless condemnation of half-understood writers, does not pay. It cuts the heedless critic off from enjoyment of writings in which he might well find somewhat to please him. It stands to reason that any writer who has stood the test of the most relentless critic of all,—the test, I mean, of *Time* itself,—has something to commend him. For many years readers have been finding some joy in him, something of beauty in its many guises: is there not something there for you? Pulling down idols gives some people a malign and perverse satisfaction; but it is, after all, a cheap pastime. Far more healthful, far more cultural, is the catholicity which makes all the world of literature your parish, so that you may range through it, not without discrimination, to be sure, but freely

and widely. I am reminded of Lord Brougham's dictum that "it is wise to read something of everything, as well as everything of something." Every literary prejudice, every literary inhibition, cripples the reader just that much; and he has just that much less of enjoyment in reading at his command. The lists of books in this volume are made to encourage a widely-ranging and entirely catholic mind.

And what a world of good books there is for such a mind! I think of the world of books as having three dimensions: time, space, and thought. The time dimension gives the reader a view of all history, stretching back into the misty morning of legend, and bringing to our eyes heroes of old epic and romance, and world-shaking events never to be forgotten. The space dimension gives the reader a view of all lands, the six continents and the seven seas that surround them, so that in his own armchair at his own fireside he may visit Cathay and Samarcand, loll under a palm on a South Sea island, or be rowed up the Nile in midwinter. But the greatest of all is the thought dimension, for it transcends time and space. Through it, the world of books brings us knowledge of life: it interprets human existence.

What is there more important than the interpretation of human life, the comment upon its problems in history, essay, fiction; in the epic, the lyric, the drama? Human life is the universal preoccupation. "The proper study of mankind," Pope insists in the familiar quotation, "is man." And who have studied man to more effect than

the masters of literature? Where is a greater psychologist than Shakespeare? Or a greater historian of heroic action than Homer? Or nobler thinkers than Milton and Goethe? Literature shows us man, first, externally. The reader is made to see him with new and sharpened eyes in the description of a master. Washington Irving describes the face of Governor Van Twiller. It

“presented a vast expanse, unfurrowed by any of those lines and angles which disfigure the human countenance with what is called expression. Two small grey eyes twinkled feebly in the midst, like two stars of lesser magnitude in a hazy firmament, and his full-fed cheeks, which had taken toll of everything that went into his mouth, were curiously mottled and streaked with dusky red, like a Spitzenberg apple.”

We see men also in action: Hector “far on the ringing plains of windy Troy,” Lear upon the wild heath, Don Quixote riding against the wind-mills. But we see men not externally only; we see also their very souls. We see the tragedy of the soul’s descent in George Eliot’s *Tito*; or we see a young man find himself in Meredith’s *Richard Feverel*. The jealousy of Medea or Othello, the vengefulness of Hamlet or Orestes, love and passion in multitudinous forms, the thwarted ambition of a Lucifer, the hypocrisy of a Uriah Heep or a Pecksniff, the expiation of a Hester Prynne, all the phenomena of human desires, aspirations, defeats, joys and sufferings are expounded and made clear to us by the master writers. Or one may make a different divison of

the treatment of human life in books: we may view men (first) separately, acting as individuals, and (second) together, interacting and acted upon by society. What a gallery of separate portraits does literature afford us! We all have our favorites: may I name a few of mine? There is that great man of the East, the afflicted but perfect Job, who kept his integrity; there is the goodly, steadfast Ulysses, he of the many devices, hero of the seed of Zeus; there is poor old mad Lear; there is swashbuckling Cyrano de Bergerac, who carried his plume high to the last; there is his own brother of a later date and more northerly clime, Gösta Berling; there is the scalawag Tom Jones; there is the tragic Jean Valjean; there is resourceful Leatherstocking; there are dear, real David Copperfield and absurd Mr. Pickwick; there is vengeful one-legged old Captain Ahab, pursuing the white whale through the seven seas; and in the last fifty years a whole new gallery, good Silas Lapham, idyllic Maria Chapdelaine, funny Mr. Polly, heroic Hugh Glass, self-reliant Jacob Vandemark. Here is mankind in infinite variety, each person sitting for his portrait to a master of portraiture. And then each one *lives in his world* as we all must; and the writer interprets the powerful influence we call social pressure, and shows how it acts and reacts, until his work becomes to us a kind of guidebook to the intricate mazes of our own strange human life.

And all this world of books is very near to *us*. Human nature is much the same as when Ruth left the land of the Moabites, as it was when

Leander swam the Hellespont to be with his Hero. Customs alter: passions remain. Politics have changed, but we may still share the feelings of Dante descending to the ninth ring of Hell. These books are still ours if we care to make them ours by sympathetic reading. For literature is a mirror of life, and we who are in the midst of life are tremendously interested in understanding it. There is no key to its problems,—let me say it in italics,—*there is no key to its problems like the works of great literature.*

So there is pleasure intellectual and moral as well as æsthetic in this reading we are undertaking, and the beauty of it is that here profit and pleasure are identical, for the highest pleasure is pure profit in itself, and vice versa. Moreover, this profit, this pleasure, is *yours*. It is a purely personal matter. "Every book," wrote Stevenson, "is, in an intimate sense, a letter to the friends of him who wrote it." It is so that we must read it, as a letter from a wise and gifted friend.

And now let me give six pieces of specific advice upon your reading:

First, read with full sympathy, casting out prejudices (which, etymologically, are pre-judgments) and giving yourselves up wholly to the will of the writer. You must *feel* him, *know* him. "When I am reading a book," said Dean Swift, "whether wise or silly, it seems to be alive and talking to me." There was a man who had the art of reading.

Second, do not worry too much about allusions you do not understand, or pay too much attention to notes and the commentary of scholars. This

writing is for you: do not let some pedant step between you and your friend the writer.

Third, read aloud as much as possible. Your roommate, your wife, your sweetheart, your best friend will probably be glad to listen to you: if not, bribery or duress of whatever sort will be excusable. You will be surprised to find how much more pleasure you get from reading by sharing it. Moreover, reading aloud is a valuable aid to interpretation. Hardress O'Grady, an English teacher of speech, in a little book called *Reading Aloud*, after pointing out how much attention writers give to the sound of their words and phrases, urges the reader to do his part as thoroughly. "First by taking in with his eyes the written word, next by saying aloud the sounds that compose the words and the rhythms of the sentences, he will, in inverse order, put himself in the same place as the author; he will be imitating those mechanical actions which were the concrete translation of the author's innermost being."

Fourth, re-read the parts you like best. You will discover new meanings, new beauties, each time you go over a great book, and it will become more and more your own.

Fifth, if the volume you are reading is your own, do not hesitate to mark in the margin the passages that appeal to you. My reason for giving this counsel may be briefly stated thus: You are collaborating with the writer when you read his book. Your experiences, ideas, and feelings join with his in producing the total effect of the book. Now, if you mark the book, you are leaving an

actual physical record of that collaboration; you have stamped the book as your own in a visible way. I hope you will own many of the books you read, and that you will stamp them with evidence of your ownership of them.

Sixth, and last, think back. Consider what you have read in the light of the whole. Discuss it with your reading partner, or with whomever you can get to listen. As to notes on your reading, do not make them if they seem onerous to you. Some people, however, find making a few notes enlightening and helpful. The flyleaves of the book are a good place. There is nothing sacred about the physical book: it is for use. For myself, I like to write something about a book after I have finished it, a little essay or review. It serves to fix my ideas about it, to make it more a part of myself and of my own background.

And after all, that is what books are for; to enlarge ourselves, to make us find ourselves. When John Neihardt set out on his trip down the Missouri in an open boat, a friend said to him mockingly, "What do you expect to find?" "Some more of myself," he answered. That is precisely what we are seeking as we set out upon this expedition—this picnic excursion, if you wish—into the world of books. What do we expect to find? *Some more of ourselves.*

BOOK LIST I

Note

Here is a list, in two parts, of some essays on books and reading. In the first part are some that I especially

recommend; in the second are others that you may like to examine when you have time.

In all the lists in this volume I have attempted to give the names of the publishers of all the books listed. Titles found in the *Everyman Library* (Dutton), or in similar good and cheap editions so far as I am acquainted with them, are followed by the abbreviation of the series. "Ev." stands for the *Everyman Library*, "E. R." for Holt's *English Readings*, "R. L. S." for the *Riverside Literature Series* published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., and "Mod." for Modern, "L." for Library, "Ser." for Series, and "Cl." for Classics in such names as the *Modern Library* (Boni & Liveright), the *Modern Student's Library* (Scribner), *Home University Library* (Holt), the *Pocket Classics* and the *Modern Readers' Library* (Macmillan), etc. Abbreviations of publishers' names will be easily intelligible.

Part I

Arnold, Matthew, "Sweetness and Light," in *Prose Selections*. E. R.

Bacon, Francis, "Of Studies," in *Essays*. Ev.

Bates, Arlo, *Talks on the Study of Literature*. Houghton.

Becker, May Lamberton, *A Reader's Guide Book*. Holt.

Stephens, H. Morse, and others, *Counsel Upon the Reading of Books*. Houghton.

Moulton, R. G., *Modern Study of Literature*. Univ. of Chicago Press.

Smith, C. Alphonso, *What Can Literature Do for Me?* Doubleday.

Woodberry, Geo. E., *Appreciation of Literature*. Harcourt.

Part II

Bostwick, Arthur E., *Earmarks of Literature*. McClurg.

Carlyle, Thos., "The Hero as Man of Letters," in *Heroes and Hero Worship*. Ev.

- Charlton, H. B., *The Art of Literary Study*. Pittman & Sons (London).
- Channing, W. E., *Self-Culture*. Crowell.
- Cooper, Lane, *Methods and Aims in the Study of Literature*. Ginn.
- Corson, H., *The Aims of Literary Study*. Macmillan.
- Crawshaw, W. H., *The Literary Interpretation of Life*. Macmillan.
- Emerson, R. W., "Books," in *Society and Solitude*. Houghton.
- Gaige, R. C., and Harcourt, Alfred, comps., *Books and Reading*. Baker-Taylor.
- Harrison, Frederic, *The Choice of Books*. Macmillan.
- Howells, W. D., *My Literary Passions*. Harpers.
- Hudson, W. H., *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*. Heath.
- Kuhns, Oscar, *The Love of Books and Reading*. Holt.
- Lang, Andrew, "Books That Have Helped Me," in *Forum*, June, 1887.
- Lee, Gerald Stanley, *The Lost Art of Reading*. Putnam.
- Lewes, Geo. H., *Principles of Success in Literature*. Academy Cl., Allyn & Bacon.
- Mabie, H. W., *Short Studies in Literature*. Dodd.
- Morley, John, "On the Study of Literature," in *Studies in Literature*. Macmillan.
- Ruskin, John, "King's Treasuries," in *Sesame and Lilies*. Pocket Cl.
- Upham, A. H., *Typical Forms of English Literature*. Oxford Univ. Press.
- Zeitlin, Jacob, Ed., *Hazlitt on English Literature*. Oxford Eng. Ser.

II. ON NOVEL-READING AND NOVEL-READERS

The first novels were not *read* at all; they were heard. In the center of a circle of half-clothed, hairy, sprawling figures, squatted Og, the storyteller, on his haunches; and while his listeners gnawed upon bones, interrupting that occupation and the story sometimes to make the cave resound with grunts of approval, Og told long tales of the wars between the tree-dwellers and the plain-dwellers, of battles with the ichthyosaur, of amazing kills of game, and incredible hauls of fish, of floods and great winds and the adventures of the tribal heroes. Then one day Wug, who belonged to the school of the younger artists, put one of Og's best stories into picture-characters scratched upon a smooth rock—and thus made the first written tale. Fiction, in short, is as old as man, and the love of a well-told tale is a primitive and elemental characteristic of the human kind.

But old as fiction is, the prose novel is really a modern type of writing. It has held a place of importance in literature for only some two hundred years, though one may trace the line easily enough (in English literature) back to Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, printed in 1485—seven years before Columbus discovered America. Not until the eighteenth century, however, was the English

novel really important in the thought-life of most reading people,—not until Defoe interested his readers in the adventures of Robinson Crusoe, until Richardson made them weep with the unfortunate Clarissa Harlowe, until Fielding made them roar at the exploits of Tom Jones. But the growth of the novel's influence upon the life and art of the world has been extraordinary. Blasco Ibañez, the Spanish novelist, wrote recently: "When historians of the future ask what we, the intellectual offspring of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, have contributed to the development of art, we may answer proudly: music and the novel. No one will venture to question that claim."

The amount of novel-reading has been steadily mounting for many years. Almost exactly a hundred years ago I find a writer in the *American Journal of Education* saying, "A vast proportion of the reading of the present day is that of novels, and they are silently exerting an influence on the character of the age almost unparalleled in the history of the world." Fifty years later Walter Besant was writing, "The novel is the only book which the great mass of mankind ever do read," and the popularity of the form has gone on increasing since Besant's time. We all read novels to-day—judges and nursemaids, cooks and congressmen, old and young, rich and poor. A thousand or so of them are published in the United States every year, and more than that in England; and single novels have had a circulation of over a million copies. A certain English novel is said to

have had, a few years ago, a total of six million readers. Being of a statistical turn of mind, I once took the pains to calculate the number of reading-hours consumed in the persual of this book, and I found that if two men had begun to read it at the time of the creation of Adam (according to the chronology of Archbishop Ussher) and had read it continuously ever since, working regular union hours (forty-four per week) they would not have used up yet the total of reading-hours which the people of our times have devoted to this book, but would have 247 years yet to go! When I began this calculation I saw something comic in it, but the vision of those two poor martyrs to statistics reading *If Winter Comes* steadily for six thousand years, and still having 247 years to read, is nothing less than tragic.

"All people with healthy literary appetites love novels," said Thackeray, thus crying up his own wares. But is it true that all fiction is healthful? This tremendous flood of novels that pour from presses roaring day and night—are they subject for rejoicing or for misgiving? Not always have thinking people viewed the novel as indulgently as we are inclined to view it to-day. The Great Awakening—that New England revival of religion in the middle of the eighteenth century with which the mystical Jonathan Edwards' name is so intimately connected—had its rise partly in an attack upon the novel-reading of the young people. Preachers for many years joined novel-reading with theater-going, card-playing, drinking and dancing as the sub-

ject of one general condemnation. When Henry Ward Beecher wrote a novel as late as 1867, some of his parishioners were shocked that he could stoop so low. I remember very well how a lovely old Quaker lady once remonstrated with me for reading novels. "They aren't *true*, are they, Frank?" she said. I confessed more readily than I would now that they were not true, but I stoutly maintained that I liked them even if they weren't. "But does thee think thee *ought* to like *lies*?" she asked. That nonplussed me, and I gave over novels for a time, from fear of losing my soul, and undertook the reading of Rollin's *Ancient History*, only to find out, after a while, that critics held Rollin to be about as much fiction as any novel. About that time I read Bacon's essay "Of Truth," beginning "'What is truth?" said jesting Pilate," and in it I noted that one of the church fathers had called poetry "devil's wine" "because it filleth the imagination," and yet, said the wise Bacon, "it is but the *shadow* of a lie." I thereupon returned to my novels, and found in historical romances such as *Thaddeus of Warsaw* and *The Last Days of Pompeii* both an ethical reassurance, and a delight that I have not yet forgotten.

But moralists have found other things to condemn in novels besides that "shadow of a lie" which is in all works of art. They have found an impulse toward immorality in many a novel. Now no entirely candid critic can blink the fact that there are novels which, to use Howells' mild phrase, "flatter the passions," without compen-

sating that evil by any commensurate gain. I shall not advertise any such books by naming them, but their number certainly does not diminish. Let us not, however, be small and fearful enough to hide our heads, ostrich-like, in the sand, and refuse a novel merely because it deals in some degree with wrong or antisocial practices: that is not the way to come to an understanding of this interesting and contradictory world of ours.

A third criticism of novel-readers is important: it is said that they waste their time, that they have nothing to show for the hours they spend with their favorite romancers. Too often, alas, the accusation is true. Too often all that is sought is a thrill, or an easy escape from the everyday duties and ideas. Do you remember what the Sirens sang as Odysseus was carried by in his black ship:

“Our song is sweeter than honey, and he that can hear
it knows

What he never had learnt from another, and has joy
before he goes. . . . ”

And if the bold Ithacans had paused, they would forever have sat beside the Sirens in their fair meadow and chanted their songs amid heaps of dead men's bones and withering flesh. But they had men's work to do, and they put wax in their ears that they might not hear the enticing songs, and rowed valiantly by. There are novels “sweeter than honey” that lull to forgetfulness like Sirens songs, and make their readers dismiss this real and actual world, and soften the moral fiber, and

break the robust will to action. If a novel has no meaning for you, if it does not *interpret some significant phase of human life*, stuff wax in your ears and row on. A housewife who sits down in her rocker after breakfast, morning-cap over uncombed hair, leaving dishes standing in the sink and beds unmade, to read the latest novel about impossible loves of impossible people till she gets into a glow of false emotion, is a pitiable figure. I think the poet Gray's idea of heaven was a poor one: it was "to lie on a sofa and read novels all day long." Thus spake Zarathustra: "I hate the reading of idlers."

No idler gets true and valid pleasure from his reading; such pleasure is reserved for the sincere reader who seeks something more than a thrill. The great novels of the world are filled with substance and meaning. Even Marion Crawford, who said that the intention of the novel is "to amuse and please, and certainly not to teach and preach," admitted that it must "amuse reasonably." But it does teach and it does preach, not the less effectively because its ethics are not always explicit and obvious.

It teaches us, first, by portraying character. It makes us acquainted with men and women. The value of such knowledge is beyond price. In business, in the professions, in social life, we need such insight into human motives as the novelist, who is an expert observer of such things, can offer us. This is an intensely practical result of the reading of good novels. No thoughtful man can read good fiction without gaining a

greater facility for understanding the workings of people's minds, the motives, passions, and feelings of diverse individuals. Thus it follows that the characters in a novel are among the elements of it most worthy of close attention.

And how delightful to become the intimate friend of these people of the novels! Do you know young David Copperfield? If you do not, I envy you the pleasure of getting acquainted with him. "I have in my heart of hearts a favorite child," wrote Dickens once, "and his name is David Copperfield."

David's childhood troubles, his experiences with the debtors' prison, his love affairs, and his final successes, bring us singularly close to him. With what unholy joy I first read of that resounding slap with which the long-suffering David punished 'umble Uriah Heep! And who can ever forget the tragedy of little Em'ly, or its sequel in the picture of the dead Steerforth lying upon the sand, his head resting upon his arm. Peggotty, Mr. Micawber, harmless Mr. Dick, Traddles, Dora and Agnes—what an imperishable gallery! And dear Davy (who was half the boy Dickens himself)—is it any wonder readers have always loved him?

Copperfield is a story of poor folk; another and more somber hero of poverty is Jean Valjean, central figure in Hugo's *Les Misérables*. He illustrates in his sufferings the wrongs of our modern social system. *Les misérables* are the poor, the illiterate, the starving—the "other half" of Paris. Valjean steals bread for hungry children,

is arrested, is sent to the galleys, is released, commits other crimes but rehabilitates himself, then wrestles with his conscience, finally gives himself up to the galleys again and escapes, eludes the great detective Javert, and redeems his life in good works. The late Bishop Quayle said that the novel should be called "The Redemption of a Soul." One of the finest portraits is that of the Bishop of D., and a high point in the story is his speech to Jean Valjean when he took the outcast in:

"'You need not tell me who you are,' he said. 'This is not my house; it is the house of Christ. It does not ask any comer whether he has a name, but whether he has an affliction. You are suffering; you are hungry and thirsty: be welcome. And do not thank me; do not tell me that I take you into my house. This is the home of no man except him who needs an asylum. I tell you, who are a traveler, that you are more at home here than I. Whatever is here is yours. What need have I to know your name? Besides, before you told me, I knew it.'

"The man opened his eyes in astonishment.

"'Really? You knew my name?'

"'Yes,' answered the Bishop, 'your name is My Brother.'"

Les Misérables is a very big book. Its most important feature as a historical novel is the description of the battle of Waterloo; its greatest achievement in psychology is Valjean's struggle before giving himself up to the authorities. Hugo paints luridly; he splashes a great canvas; he is your veritable romanticist. But he has given all students of sociology something to ponder deeply.

From Jean Valjean it is a far call to Huckleberry Finn; such a transition will serve to illustrate the diversity of the novel. Yet here is a third representative of poverty in a third nation. Mark Twain has given us in the books about Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer, and in his *Life on the Mississippi* a trilogy which is a kind of epic of the great river. And Huck, who helps to interpret that river, is as real as can be. He is Everyboy. His love for adventure, his appreciation of the outdoors, his eternal curiosity—are boyhood. I have only pity for readers who cannot care for *Huckleberry Finn*.

David Copperfield's experience in the debtors' prison, Jean Valjean's life among the miserable of Paris, and Huckleberry Finn's adventures on the broad Mississippi show us how important social themes may be treated in fiction. Novels are about individual people, of course; but we see in these instances that they are about great social classes also. My choice seems to have fallen, in the illustrative examples I have given, upon representatives of the poor; but the poor by no means unsup the novel. All classes, and more than that, all races, meet us in fiction's pages. Many of the great novels are very national in tone, and I doubt if there is a better means of acquainting oneself with a nation's true form and pressure than by the reading of its novels. The national novelists, like Thackeray, Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell in England; Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Howells in America; Balzac and Hugo in France; Turgeniev and Dostoievski in Russia, Sienkie-

wicz in Poland, Holberg, Hamsun, Bojer, Lagerlöf in Scandinavia, give us a feeling of *honesty*. They are dealing with their own materials; they grow from the soil God has given them. Mr. Albert J. Nock used to insist in the lamented *Freeman* that no man is truly educated who does not know at least one civilization besides his own, with its language and literature. Mr. Nock was right; and if we do not possess the language qualification, let us make use of the many excellent translations. To translate a novel well is far easier than to translate a poem, and there are many good translations of fiction, so that we may well come to know other cultures than ours by means of English versions of their novels.

But the novel may do more than introduce us to the contemporary life of other countries: it may make us familiar with other historical epochs. There are those who believe that of all phases of fiction, the historical novel is most valuable, because it adds to other virtues that of acquainting its readers with the past. "The history of the world has been rewritten in the last century as fiction," says Prof. Woodberry. "The reader of the historical novel . . . commands an intelligent knowledge of the history of the European world and its antecedent classical sources such as would not have been possible even to a scholar in the last age." True, history is frequently twisted in these romances—and that is the chief objection to them—but a great number are true in main outline and in spirit, and many even in detail. A few archaisms need not worry us over-much.

Among the historical novelists Scott of course stands first. Few writers in English have been so widely read as he, and there was a time when it seemed that all the writers of Europe and America would fall to imitating him. And even now that a hundred years of changing fashions in writing have passed since *Waverly* and *Rob Roy* and *Ivanhoe*, their charm is yet potent. No boyhood is complete, I think, that has not had its period of devotion to the Waverly novels. Less read to-day are Bulwer's historical romances, and those of Jane Porter. Miss Porter's *Scottish Chiefs* has always seemed to me the equal of Scott's best work. What blessed memories the very names of some of these favorites of boyhood evoke! I wonder in how many homes these old stories have been read aloud by one member of the family while others employed their hands with fireside tasks? Some years ago I clipped this little poem by Sarah N. Cleghorn because of its fine portrayal of the genesis of literary appreciation for many a lover of books:

Prone along the yellow floor
 Flung themselves the stalwart brothers
 In their nut-brown jeans and homespun,
 Staring through the narrow pane
 At the sky's lap full of stars,
 With fixed faces
 Thrilled by more than northwest wind
 And lit by more than pinewood fire!

Whose is this delicate,
 Silver-threaded

Voice that reads aloud the immortal
Bombast of the *Scottish Chiefs*? . . .

Oh, to see, to hear again
That beloved frail and wan
Little figure leaning backward
In the sleepy-hollow chair!
Oh, that she and we were there,
On that golden kitchen floor
Where the troops of Wallace marched,
And the Bruce's helmet shone,
Late into the mountain night
When the early moon was gone,
And the winds died out in seeking
Other valleys than our own!
Is it up those northward passes,
By the Black Woods' haunted glen,
Thou art vanished, O our Mother,
With the balm of spruce and pine,
And New England nights enchanted
More than those Arabian?

Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth*, which Swinburne called "the greatest historical novel ever written," has a perennial fascination. Three books about the French Revolution are Hugo's *Ninety-Three*, Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities*, and Anatole France's *The Gods Are Athirst*. There is some revival of interest, on the occasion of its centenary, in Manzoni's masterpiece, *I Promessi Sposi*, which Scott said was the best historical novel he had ever read. American interest in historical fiction, which was considerable when Cooper and Simms were writing, died down somewhat after the Civil War. Harold Frederic's

In the Valley, a fine story of the French and Indian War, and Mrs. Catherwood's novels of early exploration in the West were the heralds of a revival of the type which came upon American literature about the time of the Spanish War. Among the novels of this movement were Dr. S. Weir Mitchell's *Hugh Wynne*, *Free Quaker*, which deals with the Revolution and is one of the best of American historical novels, and Winston Churchill's *Richard Carvel* and *The Crisis*. Booth Tarkington's brief *M. Beaucaire* is full of sword-play and powdered wigs, and the auræ of great personages, and it is written with a charm and verve that make it one of the most delightful bits of romantic fiction of our generation. Mark Twain's *Joan of Arc* is an admirable study which was in this period, but scarcely of it. . . . But enough of cataloguing. I refer the reader who is greatly interested in this field to Baker's *Guide to Historical Fiction*, Nield's *Guide to the Best Historical Novels*, or—better yet—to May Lamberton Becker's *A Reader's Guide Book*.

The great impeachment which the critics have brought against historical romance, and especially against such books as *When Knighthood Was in Flower*, is that of undue reliance upon such conventions as the gold lace and brocade of costume, sensitiveness to delicate points of honor leading to picturesque duels, the unreality of the beautiful ladies always so ready to faint but so heroic in emergency, the opportune introduction of many historic persons, and all the machinery of pretty romance. But in such recent historical novels

as Mr. Boyd's *Drums* and Herbert Quick's Iowa trilogy we have a more realistic brand of fiction which may in time displace the older and more artificial technique of this literary type.

The novel teaches us, then, by portraying character, and by interpreting classes, races, and epochs. And in doing these things it is all the time enriching our background of experience, deepening our insight, enlarging our world. We dramatize the events of the novels in our own persons: we live in the Marshalsea prison with Mr. Micawber; we wander through the sewers of Paris fleeing Javert; we float down the Mississippi on a raft with Huck and the duke. We are English, French, Danish, Russian, German. We are acquainted with life in ancient Alexandria when we read *Hypatia*, with the society of Pompeii when we read Bulwer's masterpiece, with Roman life at the beginning of the Christian era when we read *Quo Vadis?* We are there; we are caught up into the whirl of things; the whole aggregate mass of emotions, social conditions, characters, influences, environment, takes hold of us and becomes personal to us; and we emerge from it, when we close the book, bigger, stronger, richer in personality, because we have experienced these phases of life, however vicariously.

Perhaps the most remarkable characteristic of the novel, considered as a literary form, is its variety. Its adaptability to diverse purposes is almost unlimited. Here the philosopher may set down his observations upon existence; here the poet may give rein to his fancy; here the historian

or the biographer may record the past. The social theorist, too, finds the novel an appropriate vehicle, and the humorist and satirist have no better medium. So that he keep a thread of narrative, the novelist may follow his own sweet will. The reason for this almost infinite adaptability of the novel is to be found in the pliability of its form. The author can do almost anything he wishes in novel-structure; all that we require of him is that he reward us in some way for our reading. I dare say that a strict structure, with due regard for suspense and climax, has a greater emotional effectiveness than loose structure; but some of the most delightful tales in the world pay little or no attention to the architectonics of novel-building. It is this freedom of method, then, which entices thinkers of many kinds—almost anyone, indeed, who has something to say to the world—to string his thoughts on a narrative thread and call the result a novel.

Take for example Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. In it the story—what there is of it—is admirable enough, but the book is mainly a fascinating encyclopedia of cetology, or “whaleology.” If you are interested in whales and whaling, here is the book for you. There is one chapter on the whale's forehead, which Melville calls “The Prairie”; one on its skin, which he calls “The Blanket”; one on its head, two on its tail, one on pictures of the whale, one on whalers in mythology, one on Jonah, and so on. Besides, there are many transcendental reflections, much symbolism, frequent dramatic passages in the

elevated style, interpolated short stories, sermons, essays, and character sketches. The action—when there is any—is powerful and weird. *Moby Dick* is not a book for the commonplace reader, for it is not a commonplace book. Or take George Borrow's *Lavengro*. Perhaps this work may be placed among the picaresque novels, but I should prefer not to try to classify it. Love of languages, love of horseflesh, love of England, fill its curious pages. It is a book to read and dwell on and return to. So also is Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth*. I have already spoken of it as a historical novel, which it is; but it is more than that: it is picaresque; it is propagandic; it is a great many other things. But above all it is moving and human. Its beggars, artists, priests, and dignitaries compose a wonderful portrait gallery. Another unique book is Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*. I have heard Butler's masterpiece called the greatest novel in the English language: I do not think it is that, but it is a stimulating and highly individualistic commentary on modern social relationships. That, too, is Meredith's *The Egoist*, which I think every man should read once a year or so for the good of his soul. Much of the delight of this book is in its subtle and beautiful technique; and a preliminary reading of Meredith's essay on *The Uses of Comedy and the Comic Spirit* will help you to appreciate that "silvery laughter of the mind" which is the great matchless quality of Meredith's fiction. Let me now mention three European books which (like the others I have just named) one may classify

only by saying paradoxically that they are each *sui generis*; and then I shall have done with my examples. "For the evocation of the profoundest feelings of pity and terror which can purge the reader's heart," says Laurence Irving, "there is no work of literary fiction that can take its place by the side of Dostoievsky's *Crime and Punishment*." Dostoievsky, with his dark background of personal tragedy, gives us in this extraordinary novel an insight into the Russian soul that none of his compatriots has surpassed. Sonia and Raskolnikoff are quite unforgettable, and the very structure of the book, amorphous and sprawling, adds to the reader's sense of vast tragedy. Very different from Raskolnikoff is Gösta Berling, Miss Lagerlöf's hero in her book of that name. Magnificent, romantic, mad hero he is—"lord of ten thousand kisses and thirteen thousand love-letters"—who is at the last content to be a country fiddler and the benefactor of his fellows, the poor. And lastly, I may name *Don Quixote*. Older than any of the other novels mentioned in this long paragraph, it is also more important in the history of the development of civilization. It was a satire upon the decayed institution of chivalry, and particularly upon the extravagant romances which attended that decay. But, strangely enough, poor crack-brained Don Quixote, who fares crazily forth as a knight-errant, to "roam through the whole world, armed cap-à-pie and mounted on his steed, in quest of adventure," turns out to be one of the most appealing of heroes, and his adventures the most entertaining.—These,

then, are a few of the distinctively original novels of the world. Do not read any of them if you are enamored of ruts and easy conventions; but if you really wish to know something of the possibilities of what Mrs. Wharton, in her admirable book *The Writing of Fiction* calls "that strange chameleon-creature, the modern novel, which changes its shape and color with every subject on which it rests,"—*then*, the reading of these eight novels will help you to gain such a knowledge.

But remember that reading a novel properly is no lazy man's job. The reader must be alert; mentally, he must be on his toes, eager to get whatever comes his way. Don't reserve your novel until you are sleepy or tired out. You must not be passive, allowing the book to be poured into you, but active, collaborating in the work. Further, I think novels should be read, so far as possible, consecutively. I dislike serials because they are unfair to the novelist. If he is to be given his chance to work up our emotion to a dramatic climax, the book should be read at as few sittings as possible. If you give him six or eight hours of your time, give them whole-heartedly; let him have his way with you.

This applies as well to the romance of adventure as to the so-called problem novel. The story of adventure, in which enjoyment of action is the main thing, also deserves well of its readers. Not infrequently such stories add *significance* to the delight of pure romance. But the sheer story value has its own importance. Thomas A. Edison

is said to have shut himself up all one day and to have sat up all the following night reading *The Count of Monte Cristo*. (That is consecutive reading for you!)

Enjoy the story element—the “yarn”—by all means, but let me urge you not to neglect the *meaning* of your novel—the theme—the true inwardness and purpose of the book. Why did the author write it? What is he getting at? What is he trying to say to you? The answer may be in setting or character, “yarn,” charm of ideas, beauty of form or personages, truth of portrayal of life, the discussion of great themes—anywhere or everywhere in the novel,—but you must find it if you are to uncover the soul of the book. *What does it accomplish?* That is the question, and by your answer you chiefly measure the book. Read, then, *alertly, consecutively, thoughtfully*: the reward will be proportionate to the effort.

BOOK LIST II

In the following list, I have suggested but one novel by each author named, in the belief that after a reader has been introduced to a novelist, he would better find his way for himself. It is better to read several novels by a favorite author, even at the sacrifice of missing the acquaintance of some other novelists who may or may not please you.

Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*. Ev.
 Bennett, *Old Wives' Tale*. Doran.
 Blackmore, *Lorna Doone*. Ev.
 Bojer, *The Great Hunger*. Century.
 Bulwer, *Last Days of Pompeii*. Ev.

- Butler, *The Way of All Flesh*. Mod. L.
 Clemens, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Harper.
 Conrad, *The Nigger of the Narcissus*. Doubleday.
 Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*. Holt.
 Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*. Appleton.
 Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*. E. R.
 De Morgan, *Alice-for-Short*. Holt.
 Dickens, *David Copperfield*. Ev.
 Dostoievsky, *Crime and Punishment*. Ev.
 Dumas, *The Count of Monte Cristo*. 2 vols. Ev.
 Eliot, *Adam Bede*. Ev.
 Fielding, *Tom Jones*. 2 vols. Ev.
 France, *The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard*. Mod.
 Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga*. 3 vols. Scribner.
 Gaskell, *Cranford*. Ev.
 Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Ev.
 Hamsun, *The Growth of the Soil*. Knopf.
 Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Burt.
 Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*. Ev.
 Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*. Macmillan.
 Hergesheimer, *Linda Condon*. Knopf.
 Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*. R. L. S.
 Hugo, *Les Misérables*. 2 vols. Ev.
 James, *Daisy Miller*. Mod. L.
 Kaye-Smith, *The End of the House of Alard*. Dutton.
 Kipling, *Kim*. Doubleday.
 Lagerlöf, *Gösta Berling*. Lambskin L., Doubleday.
 Lewis, *Arrowsmith*. Harcourt.
 London, *The Call of the Wild*. Macmillan.
 Manzoni, *I Promessi Sposi*. Macmillan.
 Melville, *Moby Dick*. Ev.
 Meredith, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*. Mod. Students L.
 Mitchell, *Hugh Wynne, Free Quaker*. Century.
 Norris, *The Octopus*. Lambskin L., Doubleday.
 Porter, *Scottish Chiefs*. Burt's Home L.

- Quick, *Vandemark's Folly*. Bobbs-Merrill.
Richardson, *Clarissa Harlowe*. Routledge, London.
Rolland, *Jean Christophe*. Holt.
Scott, *Heart of Midlothian*. Ev.
Sienkiewicz, *With Fire and Sword*. Little.
Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*. Ev.
Stevenson, *David Balfour*. Scribner.
Tarkington, *Alice Adams*. Doubleday.
Thackeray, *Henry Esmond*. Ev.
Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*. 2 vols. Ev.
Walpole, *The Duchess of Wrexhe*. Doran.
Wells, *Tono Bungay*. Duffield.
Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*. Appleton.

III. THE SHORT STORY

The short story is certainly one of the most popular of literary types. Probably there are people who do not read short stories, but I doubt if there are very many. Certainly enough stories are published to supply a very large public. Recently I made a computation which indicated that there were about a thousand stories published in this country every month—twelve thousand a year, of which I suppose some 11,800 were scarcely worth printing. Evidently there is a hungry and insistent demand for short stories, and this tremendous output is but an answer to that demand. What are the reasons for it? Why is the short story popular?

First, it is easy to read because it is short. The requirements of modern life, with its hurry and its strain, afford little leisure; and the novelist, accordingly, prospers less than the writer of short tales which may be read in odd half-hours. As Cowper put it,

“Sedentary weavers of long tales
Give me the fidgets, and my patience fails.”

The *short* story is the thing. But it has a second recommendation in its variety. Perhaps the popular magazine, founded on the principle of variety, has made the prosperity of the short story, or it may be the short story has fostered

the popular magazine; certainly the two go hand in hand. It is a dull month that does not see the birth of a few new magazines, and the news-stands are perennially crowded with periodicals whose staple is short fiction. Stories of adventure and of common life, love stories, psychological studies, sea-tales, stories of children, stories of animals, subtle tales of mysticism, exotic yarns of far lands, detective stories, terror stories—we have them all in profusion for all appetites, all opinions, all predilections. Life is “a dome of many-colored glass,” Shelley tells us; and so each fine story is a ray of light which brings us the color of its particular segment of life. This variety—this suitability to all tastes—suggests a third reason for the short story’s popularity: its journalistic nearness to its popular audience. Next to the newspaper, it is the most democratic of literary types. It responds directly and immediately to the demands of its immense audience: the people can have what they want of the various kinds of short story. If the empty, crude, and silly short story predominates just now, the sin is not wholly that of the editors and publishers; it is the great American public which must take most of the blame upon its broad shoulders.

This responsibility makes it the more incumbent upon us all to read short stories intelligently—which is to say, more discriminatingly. And if we are to do that, we must inquire what the excellences of the short story are—what *makes* a good short story. A helpful way to approach the problem will be to ask this question: “What

phases of the short story are most worth our attention as we read it?" I answer: five phases—people, action, theme, environment, and style,—and these five phases I propose to take up separately.

First, then, the *people* of the story are important. Charles Lamb once wrote, "I often shed tears in the motley Strand for very fulness of joy in so much life." Any story-teller, if he be authentic, is strongly moved by the phenomena of human life. His stories have to do with people—people thinking, feeling, acting. Not infrequently a short story is practically all character-sketch like Turgenev's "A Lear of the Steppes" or Mrs. Freeman's "A New England Nun." Shrewd, intelligent, careful psychological studies are greatly to be prized. There is too much seeking, however, for the merely quaint in character, and for the striking or bizarre. Let us require both honesty and insight in character-depiction. Another phase of the treatment of people in the short story to be noticed is the necessity of brief characterization. The short-story writer has but little space at his command, and he must give us his people—especially those who play but minor parts in his tale—in a few strokes—sometimes in a sentence. This is a great art. Thus Galsworthy gives us a character in fifty words:

"His face was in mourning for a shave, his clothes were very ragged, and he was so thin that there seemed hardly any man behind those ragged clothes. He smelt, not indeed of whiskey, but as though bereaved of it; and his blue and watery eyes were like those of a lost dog."

That description is a little masterpiece. Such gems are worth looking for when we read short stories.

Second, the *action* in a tale is certainly worthy our attention. It is the backbone of story—what I called in the preceding chapter “the yarn.” I pity the poor overeducated sophisticate who cannot enjoy a tale for the tale’s sake. “All fables, indeed, have their morals,” wrote Thoreau, “but the innocent enjoy the *story*.” May we all be innocent enough to enjoy the story; may we be acute enough, as well, to note how the writer handles his story, how Poe in “The Fall of the House of Usher” and Maupassant in “The Coward” manage their incidents to bring them to an effective climax—in short, how the author works out the possibilities of plot in his tale. This is a fascinating game—to study the way incidents are arranged and the climax worked up to. But let me give one word of warning: beware of the pedants who say that a plot must be constructed thus and so. Any method that captures our interest and enlists our emotions thereby justifies itself, and a writer may violate all the so-called laws of short-story art, so he make his tale effective. The artist is his own lawmaker; the critic follows him afar off devising formulas from his practice; then comes the artist again and shatters all formulas and stands triumphant in the midst of the wreckage. We as readers are witnesses of his triumph, and as intelligent readers it is our privilege to analyze his methods, and see how he surmounts formulas and how he hews out his own successes.

Action, and its arrangement in plot,⁷ are important, but quite as essential to a great story is the adequate expression of the underlying idea in the author's mind. A story without an idea is scarcely worth reading. What is the *theme* of the story? What is the interpretation of a life-phase which it attempts? In the lingo of the street, what is its "big idea"? This is the first question to ask, and it is more important than any other question except its sequel, which may be asked thus colloquially: "Does the author succeed in making his 'big idea' effective?" Upon the answer to this last question the story must, as I see it, stand or fall. Think of the great themes adequately treated, as the conflict between human ambition and relentless fate in Hawthorne's "The Ambitious Guest," the question of racial intermarriage in Kipling's "Without Benefit of Clergy," or the unequal contest between man and nature in Jack London's "To Build a Fire"; and then place over against these the empty fiddle-faddle of nine-tenths of our cheaper magazine stuff!

A fourth important phase of the short story is *environment*. Events always happen *somewhere* in space, and a realization of that somewhere is important to our understanding of the events. It is important also to our understanding of the characters, for does not environment largely make or unmake the man? What would Conrad's sailors be without the sea, or Chekov's men and women without their Russia? Some critics of the recent short story have objected to the present emphasis upon setting; they have even called it

faddish; and yet considered either historically or philosophically it is an essential of short-story art. It cannot justly be called a fad because it is not ephemeral: from Irving to Ruth Suckow, setting has always occupied a large place in American short fiction. That it will continue to do so must be the conclusion of any student who recognizes the close correlation of place with character, with action, and with theme.

The last phase of the short story which I shall mention is *style*. I shall not attempt a definition of style further than to say that it is an author's manner of writing. It is best when it is perfectly suited to the subject matter in hand; and when beauty of word, phrase, and movement is married to beauty of idea, we have literature of enduring charm and joy. In illustration, note these four sentences from a story by Haniel Long in *The Midland*:

"They were in a wood of ancient oaks. Every tree in this wood was a veiled woman with a black harp, and there played about each a russet and tawny flame, and from the being of each went forth limbs and branches. The music in the air came not from the wind in the leaves, but from the fingers of the women moving over strings. Certain of the trees were dying, but even in the face of death, the harp discoursed only of life—of life forever."

A beautiful style is ever a miracle, but all great stories have at least a glint of such magic.

Such are the important phases of the short story—people, action, theme, environment, and style. But another aspect of modern fiction re-

mains to be discussed: the eternal and often fruitless quarrel between realism and romanticism. "I refuse to discuss any question with a man who will not define," Voltaire once said; let me immediately proceed to define these terms realism and romanticism, not as two opposed types of writing, but as two different methods of attaining the same end, often merging into each other, though representing two different attitudes. The realist says, "I will tell the truth, often the very facts; whether the truth is pleasant or unpleasant, whether it portrays vice or virtue, whether you like it or not, I will tell the truth though the heavens fall!" But he thinks we ought to like it, because he thinks it is good for us. The romanticist says, "I too will tell truth, but it shall be essential truth and the higher truth; and I will make the telling of it pleasant with curious fables and much delight, for my readers, poor fellows, are sufficiently afflicted in their daily lives with the dull and the drab." Such are the positions of the two schools in regard to the method of telling the truth about life.

Realism, at the present moment, undoubtedly has the upper hand in our more significant literature. This is perhaps to be expected in an age of scientific trend. Fired with a divine curiosity, the realist is not satisfied until he has led his inquiry into every corner of the universe—into tenements and brothels and mines and factories and bungalows and morgues. He comes to his book "from going up and down in the earth and from walking to and fro in it." Nothing is to be

locked away from him: he even tries to reach, in these days, the inmost recesses of the subconscious mind—the subliminal ego—and sometimes writers like Sherwood Anderson get lost there. The results of this pitiless searching occasionally offend our taste and shock our modesty, though romantic fiction is quite as apt to offend against the moralities as realism, and more romantic books are suppressed than realistic. And the realist reassures us: his facts are good for us, he says. Soberly, it can scarcely be doubted that the realist is, in the main, doing a great service to literature. He is linking it as never before with life: he is explaining our world to us, not always truly, but honestly and sincerely, and he is worth our hearing.

If the realist is more conspicuous in our significant literature, the romanticist has more reading-hours to his credit. A very large share of the twelve thousand short stories published annually in these United States are distinctively romantic in intention. They aim to furnish the tired business man, and the harassed housewife, and all of us who from one cause or another are world-weary, a means of escape. The realist disturbs such seekers after the ways of pleasantness and peace, and they turn from the irritating confusion of modern realism to the clearer joys of the romanticists, new or old, or even to the milder realists. In the words of an anonymous newspaper poet,

“When psychoanalysis vexes
The feminine novelist’s heart,
And she thinks the discussion of sex is
The ultimate triumph of Art,

I return to the simple romances
Of ante-Victorian Jane,
Or I find a new charm in the fancies
Of *Cranford* again."

And the writers of romance are not without earnestness too: they will tell us that the apparent realities are deceptions and half-truths at best, that it is they who distill essential truth (much as the poet does), and that it is they who are discovering the world to us. Such is their aim, and the great romancers are always successful in it. If romantic fiction languishes just now, it will not do so forever. The fact is that romance has eternity in its heart: it is deathless.

To divide romance and realism in all their manifestations each from each is impossible. The most hardened realist is on occasion a romantic, and the romanticist not infrequently borrows the methods of realism. Dickens and Hugo are sometimes realists; Gorky and Theodore Dreiser lapse into romanticism. The two kinds are scarcely separable; most writers compromise, for, as I have said, the difference is merely a matter of method, not of purpose.

We need not, then, feel any very imperative necessity to classify short stories as realistic or romantic. Let us consider them in relation to the five phases of their nature that I have pointed out, and let us ask ourselves, "What is the writer trying to do?" Is it a character-sketch he has in mind, or a dramatic episode, or the creation of a mood, or the presentation, mainly, of an idea? In short, find out, by observing the distinctive

characteristics of the story, what its author is trying to do, and then judge it on that basis.

In conclusion, let me repeat that the emotional effectiveness of a story is of its essence. However it is gained, it is this emotional ascendancy over the reader that makes us acknowledge a story as great. Give yourself up to it. Let the writer lead you as the Pied Piper led the children of Hamelin; and leading you, he will *teach* you more than you realize. As William Dean Howells once wrote of Hamlin Garland: "He holds me with his story, and he will not let me go till he has *taught* me something more than he has told me. Greater than this I do not think we ought to ask of any."

BOOK LIST III

In Part I of this list I have named some anthologies, starring those I would especially recommend. Let me say, however, that it is sometimes better to read single-author collections than to wander too aimlessly among many writers.

In Part II, I have arranged a few really fine short stories too arbitrarily in groups. The titles of the collections in which the stories listed appear are given in each case; and when the title of the story is also that of the volume, it is printed in italics.

Part I

* Ashmun, *Modern Short Stories*. Macmillan.

Clark and Lieber, *Great Short Stories of the World*. McBride.

Dawson, *The Great English Short Story Writers*. Harper.

Eaton, *Best Continental Short Stories 1923-24*, etc.; *Best French Short Stories 1923-24*, etc. Small Maynard.

- Esenwein, *Short Story Masterpieces* (French, 2 vols., Russian, 2 vols.) Home Corr. School.
- * Frederick, *Stories from the Midland*. Knopf.
- Georgian Stories* (1922, 1924, 1925 etc.). Putnam.
- Howells, *Great Modern American Stories*. Boni & L.
- * Jessup, *American Short Stories*. Allyn & Bacon.
- * Jessup and Canby, *The Book of the Short Story*. Appleton.
- O'Brien, *Great Modern English Stories*. Boni & L.
- * O'Brien, *The Best Short Stories* (annual vols. since 1915). Small Maynard.
- O'Brien and Cournos, *Best British Short Stories* (annual since 1922). Small Maynard.
- O. Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories (annual since 1919). Doubleday.
- Patten, *Short Story Classics*. (5 vols.) Collier.
- Patten, *International Short Stories* (3 vols.) Collier.
- * Pence, *Short Stories by Present Day Authors*. Macmillan.
- Rhys, *English Short Stories from the XV to the XX Century*. Ev.
- Schweikert, *French Short Stories*. Scott, Foresman.
- Seltzer, *Best Russian Short Stories*. Mod. L.
- Stories by American Authors* (10 vols.); ditto *English* (10 vols.); ditto *Foreign* (8 vols.). Scribner.
- * Thomas, *Atlantic Narratives* (2 series) Atl. Mo. Press.

Part II

A. Stories Emphasizing Place

- Duncan, Norman, "The Revolution at Satan's Trap," in *Every Man for Himself*.
- Garland, Hamlin, "Up the Coolly," in *Main Traveled Roads*.
- Hardy, Thomas, "The Three Strangers," in *Wessex Tales*.

Kipling, Rudyard, "At the End of the Passage," in *Life's Handicap*.

London, Jack, "To Build a Fire," in *The Lost Face and Other Stories*.

Poe, E. A., "The Masque of the Red Death," in *Works* (vol. 4 of Crowell ed.).

Steele, Wilbur Daniel, "White Horse Winter," in *Land's End*.

Stevenson, R. L., *Three Merry Men*.

B. Stories with Historical Settings

Andrews, Mary R. S., *The Perfect Tribute*.

Freeman, Mary E. Wilkins, *Silence*.

Page, Thos. N., *The Burial of the Guns*.

Tarkington, Booth, *M. Beaucaire*.

C. Stories Emphasizing Characterization

Anderson, Sherwood, "I'm a Fool," in *Best Short Stories*, 1922.

Chekhov, Anton, *The Darling*.

Dreiser, Theodore, "My Brother Paul," in *Twelve Men*.

Jewett, Sarah Orne, *A White Heron*.

Turgenev, Ivan, *A Lear of the Steppes*.

Wharton, Edith, *Ethan Frome*.

Yeziarska, Anzia, "The Fat of the Land," in *Hungry Hearts*.

D. Stories Emphasizing Plot

Doyle, Conan, "How it Happened," in *Danger!*

France, Anatole, "Our Lady's Juggler," in *Mother of Pearl*.

Glaspell, Susan, "A Jury of Her Peers," in *Contact!*

Hawthorne, Nathaniel, "The Ambitious Guest," in *Twice-Told Tales*.

Maupassant, Guy, "The Necklace," in *The Odd Number*.

"O. Henry," "The Gift of the Magi," in *The Four Million*.

Poe, E. A., "The Fall of the House of Usher," in *Works* (vol. 3 of Crowell ed.).

E. Love Stories

Davis, Richard Harding, "On the Fever Ship," in *The Lion and the Unicorn*.

Foote, John. Taintor, "Opus 43, No. 6" in *The Lucky Seven*.

Hart, Francis Noyes, "Green Gardens," in *Contact!*

Kipling, Rudyard, "The Brushwood Boy," in *The Day's Work*.

Tarkington, Booth, *The Beautiful Lady*.

F. Stories of Children

Andreyev, Leonid, *The Little Angel*.

Antin, Mary, "The Lie," in *Atlantic Narratives*, 2d Series.

Daudet, Alphonse, "The Death of the Dauphin," in *Stories from Daudet*.

Kelly, Myra, "A Christmas Present for a Lady," in *Little Citizens*.

White, Wm. Allen, "The King of Boyville," in *The Court of Boyville*.

G. Stories of Adventure

Colcord, Lincoln, *The Game of Life and Death*.

Conrad, Joseph, *Youth*.

Hergesheimer, Joseph, "Wild Oranges," in *Gold and Iron*.

Kipling, Rudyard, "The Man Who Would Be King," in *Under the Deodars*.

Stevenson, R. L., "The Sire de Malétroit's Door," in *The New Arabian Nights*.

H. *Mystery Stories*

- Bierce, Ambrose, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," in *In the Midst of Life*.
Chesterton, G. K., "The Blue Cross," in *The Innocence of Father Brown*.
Crawford, F. Marion, "The Upper Berth," in *Wandering Ghosts*.
De Alarcon, "The Tall Woman," in Curtis' *Modern Ghosts*.
Doyle, Conan, "The Red-Headed League," in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.
Gilman, Charlotte P., *The Yellow Wall-Paper*.
Jacobs, W. W., "The Monkey's Paw," in *The Lady of the Barge*.
James, Henry, "A Turn of the Screw," in *The Two Magics*.
Johnson, Owen, "One Hundred in the Dark," in *Murder in Any Degree*.
Steele, Wilbur Daniel, "Footfalls," in *The Shame Dance*.

I. *Stories of Fantasy*

- Blackwood, Algernon, "The Man Who Played upon a Leaf," in *The Lost Valley*.
Burt, Struthers, "The Blood-Red One," in *Chance Encounters*.
"Fiona Macleod," "Fisher of Men," in *The Sin-Eater*.
Hawthorne, Nathaniel, "Young Goodman Brown," in *Mosses from an Old Manse*.
Kipling, Rudyard, "They," in *Traffics and Discoveries*.
Poe, E. A., "Ligeia," in *Works*.
Wilde, Oscar, "The Star-Child," in *A House of Pomegranates*.

J. *Humorous Stories*

- Butler, Ellis P., *Pigs is Pigs*.
Cobb, Irvin, "The Bull Called Emily," in *Place to Place*.

Cohen, Octavus Roy, "The Fight That Failed," in *Come Seven*.

"Mark Twain," "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," in *Works*, vol. 19.

Stockton, Frank R., *The Christmas Wreck*.

Wister, Owen, *Philosophy Four*.

K. *Stories of Animals*

Brown, John, *Rab and His Friends*.

Davis, R. H., *The Bar Sinister*.

Foote, John Taintor, "Runt," in *Dumb-Bell*.

Kipling, Rudyard, "Bimi" in *Life's Handicap*.

Seton, Thompson, "Silverspot," in *Wild Animals I Have Known*.

Terhune, Albert Payson, "No Trespassing," in *Further Adventures of Lad*.

IV. ESSAY-READING

Edwin P. Whipple, the literary critic, once found himself with Ralph Waldo Emerson in a little village in Massachusetts. Both men were bound for Concord, five miles away, and Emerson, being provided with a horse and buggy, invited the younger man to ride with him. Whipple gladly accepted, for he admired Emerson to the point of veneration. So the two set out. The day was fine, the roads were good, and the horse was slow. The talk was celestial: Whipple led the great man on and on; he talked of nature and God and of the innate capabilities of man, he listened gravely to Whipple's opinions; his conversation was that of a poetical archangel. The old horse jogged on half asleep; it took him two hours to cover the five miles, ambling along the quiet country road to Concord—but what hours they were! Whipple never forgot them, nor the talk that made them memorable. Now, this experience of Whipple's illustrates my idea of an essay. You jog along a quiet country road behind an ambling nag, in conversation the while with a wise and genial friend, careless whether you arrive at Concord before nightfall or not; and your whole thought-life is enriched by the experience.

The informal essay is one of the most liberal of forms. It affords every opportunity for the exercise of the writer's individuality: he may do any-

thing he has a mind to, so that he carry us with him in his one-horse chaise. The road may wind about and about, go uphill and down dale and bring us to Concord in one hour or four. It may explore side-roads and get quite off the main track; but so long as we do not lose our companion of the journey, we shall be satisfied. The essay has been compared to the lyric poem, because it is an essential expression of the individuality of the author; or, again, Professor Brander Matthews compares it to familiar verse because it is witty and wise and informal. Its worth to us depends on the worth to us of its author; if he attracts us, we follow him gladly till we have made his most precious offerings ours. We are likely to require of him, I think, five qualities, in greater or less degree according to our own tastes and opinions. These five qualities are experience, learning, wisdom, fancy, and personal charm.

Most great essayists have been men of experience—men who have seen somewhat of life. These young men who write so much in some of our journals must needs be extraordinarily clever indeed if they can equal the older men as essayists,—let us remember Bacon's words: "Old men for counsel; young men for action." Montaigne had seen much of politics and society before he settled down to write his essays. And what shall we say of his Roman exemplars, the statesmen Cicero and Seneca? Bacon, too, was a man of very weighty affairs. Lamb had little knowledge of politics, but much of human life; Hazlitt as well as Lamb knew personal tragedy; Carlyle's greatest

experiences were not the less vital for being spiritual. Macaulay played a prominent rôle in government, and De Quincey lived both strenuously and strangely. In America, Franklin had the widest possible experience; Irving was a traveler and observer before he was an essayist; Emerson was branded a heretic and would have been persecuted if he had not been uninclined to fight back; Thoreau and Burroughs were experienced in the deep lore of the woods and fields; while George William Curtis knew the world of politics, as did also one of our finest essayists, Woodrow Wilson. Experience of life in some of its important phases is the first quality we require of our writers of essays.

Many of us require learning of them also. We are reluctant to be taught by men who have not themselves the mastery of certain fields of thought. We do not require a steady stream of allusions, certainly; but an intellectual equipment that naturally and readily finds illustration and corroboration of its ideas in history and art and literature commends itself the more inescapably to us. We accept more willingly the man whose knowledge is wide and varied and sure than the man who merely throws out his ideas at random like unbaited hooks, which may catch whales or minnows, or nothing.

But better than learning, better than experience, is that quality that transmutes them both—wisdom. For,

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,
And the man that getteth understanding.

For the gaining of it is better than the gaining of silver,
And the profit thereof than fine gold.
She is more precious than rubies
And none of the things thou canst desire is to be compared unto *her*.
Length of days is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honor.
Her ways are the ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace."

Learning is of books; wisdom is of life. It is this wisdom that grows out of experience and learning and reflection which is the choicest fruitage of the essay. And thus it is the rich and varied mind, which is well-furnished withal, that is best suited to the essay. Plutarch, Cicero, Seneca, Montaigne, Thomas à Kempis, Bacon—philosophers, thinkers, humanists all—writers who have something to say that has been distilled out of large lives and profound meditations. "The reading of books," wrote old Isaac Barrow in one of his sermons, "what is it but conversing with the wisest men of all ages and countries, who thereby communicate to us their most deliberate thoughts, choicest notions, and best intentions, couched in good expression?"

"Choicest *notions*, and best *inventions*," says the good Barrow, thus indicating a certain play of fancy which is part and parcel of a fine essay. The many-sided and rich personality that is back of a good essay is not always sedate: it is playful; it is brilliant; it is apt to be delightfully unexpected. It is not forever debating "Of Truth," "Of Friendship," of this or that great problem, like those fallen angels that Milton tells us of who sat apart

“on a hill retir’d,
In thoughts more elevate, and reason’d high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate . . .
And found no end . . .”

But our essayists write also “On the Origin of Roast Pig,” “On Going a Journey,” “On Ears,” “Getting Up on Cold Mornings,” “The Saturday Night Bath,” “On Sawing Wood,” “Fishes’ Faces,” and so on. And frivolous as these titles may seem to be, we are delighted, in reading the essays, to come upon really profound observations on life; we are like deep-sea divers, who, tracing their way through coral and shells and the fairy-world of the sea-gardens, come suddenly upon the pearl of price. We may read, however, for both sea-flowers and pearls; fancy is no more to be despised than wisdom, and a skillful mixture of them represents literary success. In the informal essay prose follows hard on the steps of poetry: many of our best-loved essayists have been poets as well—Addison, Johnson, Goldsmith, Goethe, Schiller, Leigh Hunt, Macaulay, Hugo, Emerson, Lowell, Holmes, Stevenson, Santayana, Christopher Morley—and many more.

Well-beloved these essayists are indeed. Why do we bear them a personal affection? Browning’s poem “My Star,” ends with the lines:

“Mine has opened its heart to me:
Therefore I love it.”

That is the explanation. These writers have unbosomed themselves to us as to the most intimate friend of the fireside; we know the inmost tracery

of their thought and feeling; they are more real to us than many a friend that we know in the flesh. "My favorite books," said Bronson Alcott, "have a personality and complexion as distinctly drawn as if the author's portrait were framed into the paragraphs and smiled upon me as I read his illustrated pages." I am sure that Alcott's experience is not uncommon. For myself, I feel as personal an affection for Charles Lamb as though I had worked desk by desk with him at the East India Company and walked home with him every day through London crowds. And how often I have smoked a pipe with Thomas Carlyle and heard his diagnoses alike of the ills of the body politic and of his own dyspepsia! These men I know and love, for I have made them a part of myself. And Thoreau—I have walked with him around Walden Pond as I listened to him quote the old poets; indeed it was he and Ellery Channing and I that set the Concord woods afire when we should have been at town meeting. It is, in short, the charm of personality that makes the essay most attractive. This is the last and one of the most important of the five qualities of the essay I have chosen to discuss—experience, learning, wisdom, fancy, and personal charm.

It is the informal essay I have chiefly been talking about. Perhaps I should attempt some classification of the *forms* of the type known as the essay. Classifications ought not to get in the way of our appreciation of literature: the writers themselves do not often waste any anxiety on the question of whether their productions will fit into

the categories so nicely devised by critics. Yet there is some use for the student in classifications, provided they are not taken too seriously. We may very generally define two classes of the literary essay—the informal and the formal. The informal essay has no exact order; it takes a central idea, and then it goes off on tangents from that idea, it follows bypaths, it looks upon all the suggestions of the topic as invitations to digress. It is, moreover, full of allusions to story and art and philosophy and history. It is exceedingly personal: Montaigne said "It is myself that I portray." The vertical pronoun is very prominent in it. Style, that personal quality in writing, is of its essence. Lastly, it is witty and clever. Puns, entertaining anecdote, quaint characterizations, epigrams, brilliant word-jugglery, and amusing twists of phrase belong to it. As for subject matter, the informal essayist loves to deal with commonplace things of our daily lives, and among the happiest experiences of essay-reading are those occasions when we find our own peculiar thoughts in regard to familiar matters stated cleverly for us by some essayist who chances to possess the same idiosyncrasies as we.

Some of these qualities that I have mentioned are found in the more formal essay too, but in it the personality of the writer may be subordinated, fancy is likely to be more subdued, and the subject matter is the chief interest. The thoughts are more carefully marshaled to arrive at a definite conclusion. Descriptive pieces may belong to this class, like Poe's essay on Landor's cottage or

Irving's "Westminster Abbey"; and perhaps certain character-sketches belong there, too, like those in Addison's "De Coverley Papers." But probably the greater part of formal essays have been expository and argumentative. These two kinds are, in actual use, not often separated: even the news-story, which theoretically should contain no argument, often seems to have an inclination in that direction. Prominent in the formal-essay class are the critical article, the scientific study, and the philosophical essay.

The essay in literary criticism has great variety. There is the philosophical disquisition, like Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* or Lessing's *Laocoon*; there is the rather pedestrian article like Lowell's and those in the old quarterly reviews; there are essays which emphasize the personalities of their subjects, like the *Lundis* of Saint-Beuve, or the *Literary Friends and Acquaintance* of Howells; and there are the clever epigrammatic essays like those of Chesterton and Shaw and Mencken. Let us not forget the prefaces, which from Caxton to Henry James, are often good and profitable reading.

Travel books are usually series of loose essays on a narrative thread. Few types of reading have more charm than the good book of travels. The older books of this sort were largely compilations of wonder-fables—Sinbad, Marco Polo, Mandeville, Münchhausen: their authors had to lie imaginatively, as Peer Gynt or Captain John Smith were prone to do. The Elizabethans were tremendously interested in the travels which were

so rapidly enlarging their world, and the indefatigable Hakluyt brought the stories of the voyages together. But we read these old travels little nowadays: there is something ephemeral about travel literature. Such writing has always been very popular in America, and there is no dearth of it in publishers' lists to-day. I shall never forget a certain voyage in the delightful company of Charles Dudley Warner in his *Winter on the Nile*, or a visit to the Marquesas with Herman Melville in *Typee*, as well as other visits to the same islands in *The Marriage of Loti*, and in Frederick O'Brien's *White Shadows in the South Seas*. Lafcadio Hearn is a delightful guide to Japan, and Pierre Loti to Japan, Morocco, India, and other far places. Bayard Taylor's *Views Afoot* was a famous book in its day, and is still good reading; Mark Twain's travel books are often hilarious; and Harry Franck's "vagabondings" are both enjoyable and informative, while William Beebe's jungle books combine the fascination of science with the charm of exotic lands. Borrow's *Bible in Spain* is one of the most interesting of travel books, and Stevenson's *Travels with a Donkey* is delightful, too. But enough and too much of cataloguing. Read some of these books and join the great company of fireside travelers: you will avoid all the inconveniences and annoyances and tiresomeness, but if you have imagination you will miss none of the delights, of actual travel.

Allied to the travel book is the nature essay. Here we have a type of writing that has many charming examples. It is frequently both very

informal and highly personal—and when it is well done it is always delightful. Good old Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler* is an early example, and Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selborne* is a work in the same genre. Thoreau's *Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers* is a series of nature essays too little known and appreciated. John Burroughs and John Muir were, of course, masters of this kind of writing.

More popular, more commercial, is a type of the essay which has been developed by the American popular magazine within the last generation, and which is commonly called the "special article." It may, or may not, be ephemeral. It is to be found in nearly all the important magazines, and is most true to type in those of largest circulation. There are certain very definite requirements: an attractive, entertaining style, timeliness, perfect clearness, and "the human note." At its best it possesses all these qualities, and in addition, authoritativeness; at its worst it is flippant and unimportant. Its most distinctive characteristic, I should say, is its great effectiveness in making a subject clear and interesting. It is journalism, but often very excellent journalism.

The editorial is quite as subject to the demands of the journalism of the day, for it usually has what is called a "news-peg," and is written for hurried reading; but it is older than the special article. The so-called "leading article" in the London *Times* has always carried great weight. In America the great editors before the Civil War exerted immense power. It used to be said that

readers of the *Tribune* always waited before making up their minds, to see "what Greeley said about it." In these days the power of the editorial has declined with a certain loss of confidence in the newspaper, but the writer who commands an audience running into hundreds of thousands has still a great weapon. The editorial is shorter than formerly and usually less bellicose. When it is well-made it is highly unified, cogent, clear, and forceful. Sincerity and high-mindedness are marks of its greatness, and it is most effective when it strikes home to Mr. Average Reader, establishes kinship with him, and moves his feelings. It seems that in these days, the editors of the newspapers in the smaller cities are able to do this rather more successfully than those who direct the editorial pages of the great metropolitan dailies; at any rate we have the third Samuel Bowles at Springfield, Massachusetts, William Allen White at Emporia, Kansas, and, until recently, Henry Watterson at Louisville, Kentucky. "What is the editor created to do?" asked William Allen White some years ago. "It is certain that he is not a preacher," he continued, for "if he preaches too much he is closed out by the sheriff. It is certain that he is not a teacher. If he teaches too much he is closed out by the mob. It is certain that he is not a giver of law nor a ruler over the people. For if he sets himself up as an autocrat, there is an atmospheric disturbance, and places that knew him will know him no more. . . ." And Mr. White concludes, "The editor must be guide, philosopher, and friend to all, rich and poor."

It is a good definition. It is personality that gets an editor accepted as guide, philosopher and friend. Just as in the more classic informal-essay the impress of the writer's individuality makes or mars, so in this journalistic development of the form it is again the ruling factor.

We come, finally, to specific principles for guidance in reading essays. I have emphasized sufficiently the fact that the factor of personality is one to be looked for in all essays. Think of them as conversation, conversation with a wise and genial man. Let us get our essays from Emerson's mouth while we sit with him in his old one-horse chaise, even though we have to do it in imagination. In short, we must appreciate the human element in the essay. Secondly, let us read thoughtfully, disagreeing where and when we will, but with minds open to new suggestions. Some essayists are chiefly valuable for stimulation; we may not agree with them in one contention out of ten, and yet we may enjoy reading them. Read, thirdly, to mark and to remember. Let me reiterate what I said in my first lecture: own the books you read, and mark them up. Money could not buy my set of Emerson; I have made it too much mine in all its margins.

These are only hints, however; the main thing is to get the essays and to know the essayists. We are told that the essay is out of harmony with modern life, that it is too leisurely for the pace of to-day. If that is so, then so much the worse for modern life. If we do not have time to read reflectively, if we are in such a hurry that wisdom

cannot catch up with us, then our lives need a radical rearrangement. I take it that such is not the case with those who read these chapters. To you I commend the essay in all its forms.

BOOK LIST IV

In Part I, are listed some books by the great essayists; in Part II, a few good anthologies are named.

Part I

- Addison, Joseph, *Roger de Coverley Papers*. E. R.
 Addison and Steele, *The Spectator* (3 vols.). Ev.
 Arnold, Matthew, *Essays Literary and Critical*. Ev.
 Bacon, Francis, *Essays*. Ev.
 Bagehot, Walter, *Literary Studies*. (2 vols.). Ev.
 Baker, Ray Stannard, *Adventures in Contentment*.
 Lambskin L., Doubleday.
 Beebe, Wm., *Jungle Peace*. Holt.
 Belloc, Hilaire, *First and Last*. Methuen, London.
 Birrell, Augustine, *Obiter Dicta*. (2 vols.). Scribner.
 Borrow, Geo., *The Bible in Spain*. Ev.
 Brooks, Chas. S., *Hints to Pilgrims*. Yale Press.
 Broun, Heywood, *Seeing Things at Night*. Harcourt.
 Cabell, Jas. Branch, *Beyond Life*. Mod. L.
 Carlyle, Thos., *Heroes and Hero-Worship*. Ev.
 Chesterton, G. K., *Heretics*. Lane.
 Cobbett, Wm., *Rural Rides* (2 vols.). Ev.
 Curtis, Geo. W., *Prue and I*. Ev.
 De Quincey, Thos., *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. Ev.
 Emerson, R. W., *Essays* (1st and 2d series); *Society and Solitude*. Both Ev.
 Goldsmith, Oliver, *A Citizen of the World in Works of Oliver Goldsmith*. Globe ed., Macmillan.

Hazlitt, Wm., *Lectures on English Comic Writers, and Miscellaneous Essays.* Ev.

Hearn, Lafcadio, *Exotics and Retrospectives.* Little, Brown & Co.

Holliday, R. C., *Walking-Stick Papers.* Doran.

Holmes, O. W., *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.* Ev.

Howells, W. D., *Literary Friends and Acquaintance.* Harper.

Huneker, James, *Ivory, Apes and Peacocks.* Scribner.

Irving, Washington, *Sketch Book.* E. R.

James, Wm., *Selected Papers on Philosophy.* Ev.

Johnson, Samuel, *Essays from the Rambler.* Doubleday.

Lamb, Chas., *Essays of Elia.* Ev.

Leacock, Stephen, *Literary Lapses.* Lane.

Lowell, J. R., *Among My Books* (2 vols.). Houghton.

"Loti, Pierre," *Madame Chrysanthème.* Routledge.

Lucas, E. V., *Character and Comedy.* Macmillan.

Lynn, Margaret, *A Stepdaughter of the Prairie.* Macmillan.

Macaulay, T. B., *Essays* (2 vols.). Ev.

Marquis, Don, *Prefaces.* Appleton.

Mencken, H. L., *Prejudices* (1st series). Knopf.

Meynell, Alice, *Colour of Life.* Way & Williams, Chicago.

Milne, A. A., *Not That It Matters.* Methuen, London.

Mitchell, Donald G., *Dream Life.* Burt's Home L.

Montaigne, Michel, *Essays* (3 vols.). Ev.

Morley, Christopher, *Shandygaff.* Doubleday.

O'Brien, Frederick, *White Shadows in the South Seas.* Century.

Replier, Agnes, *Essays in Idleness.* Houghton.

Ruskin, John, *Sesame and Lilies.* E. R.

Santayana, Geo., *Little Essays.* Constable, London.

Sherman, Stuart P., *My Dear Cornelia.* Atlantic.

Stevenson, R. L., *Essays.* Mod. Students L. *An Inland Voyage and Travels with a Donkey.* E. R.

- Strunsky, Simeon, *Post-Impressions*. Dodd.
 Swift, Jonathan, *Tale of a Tub; Battle of the Books*. Ev.
 Thackeray, W. M. *Roundabout Papers; The English Humorists*. Ev.
 Thoreau, H. D., *Walden*. Ev. *A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers*. Mod. Students L.
 Walton, Izaak, *The Compleat Angler*. Ev.
 Warner, Chas. D., *My Winter on the Nile*. Houghton.
 White, Gilbert, *Natural History of Selborne*. Ev.
 White, Wm. Allen, *An Editor and His People*. Macmillan.
 Wilson, Woodrow, *Mere Literature*. Houghton.

Part II

- Brewer, David J., ed., *World's Best Essays* (10 vols.). Kaiser.
 Heaton, John L., ed., *The Story of a Page* (N. Y. World).
 Krock, Arthur, ed., *Editorials of Henry Watterson*.
Little Essays from the Sun. Harper.
 Matthews, Brander, ed., *Oxford Book of American Essays*. Oxford Press.
 Morley, Christopher, ed., *Modern Essays* (2 series).
 Peacock, W., ed., *Selected English Essays*. Frowde.
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V. HISTORY AS LITERATURE

I realize that I may be confronted at the outset by critics who will object, "But history is not literature!" To some people there is something sacrosanct about the very word literature, and any writing which aims chiefly to be useful, which keeps its feet on the earth, and never soars, is cast into the limbo of cookbooks and almanacs. But the term literature is large enough to include more than *belles lettres*, and more than masterpieces: some very humble writing has a degree of beauty which is its passport into the sacred realm. Can you imagine a botanist saying, "It is only the rare and perfect specimens that interest me. I have a botanic ideal, and I shall give attention only to the perfect lotus from the river Nile, certain rare tree-orchids, and the gorgeous passion-flowers of South America: why should I waste time upon dusty goldenrod or the common wild rose?" Such a man would not be a very thorough botanist; your true botanist is interested in *all* flowers; he is interested, moreover, in other plants—in ragweed, burdock, and potatoes. So with the catholic reader of literature: he knows his Homer and Sophocles and Dante and Shakespeare, but he does not despise all writers of lesser magnitude. He will read Artemus Ward and Chekhov, and Arthur Brisbane and Amy Lowell. He does not limit himself to *belles lettres*, but reads sociology

and history and philosophy. Even advertisements may sometimes come within his fold. Something of beauty, something of charm, something of power may lift a book or article from mere writing into literature. This we require of literature, and little more: that it shall give us pleasure of an elevated kind.

Do histories please us? Do they have the something of beauty, charm, or power which I have mentioned? Great histories surely have. Yet here I realize I am on a foughten field: there are those who think history must not be written to please. The trouble is that many modern historians think good writing and meticulous truth-telling are inconsistent. "Brilliant and ingenious writing has been the bane of history," wrote Frederic Harrison once. Brilliant and ingenious writing was never the bane of anything but dullness and ineffectiveness; the bane of history may be carelessness, unsound thinking, or the lack of a historical conscience, or involved or obscure writing; but brilliant writing can be only the greatest aid to history. There is no real conflict between *scholarship*, which has to do with facts, and *literary form*, which has to do with beauty. They should be allies, not enemies. Woodrow Wilson put the situation admirably in an essay which he called "The Truth of the Matter." It is only by *art* that we shall have the truth of the matter, he says,—“by fresh study and first-hand vision: at the mouths of men who stand in the midst of old letters and dusty documents not like antiquarians, but like those who see a distant country

and a far-away people before their very eyes, as real, as full of life and hope and incident, as the day in which they themselves live. Let us have done with humbug and come to plain speech. The historian needs an imagination quite as much as he needs scholarship, and consummate literary art as much as candor and common honesty. Histories are written in order that the bulk of men may read and realize; and it is as bad to bungle the telling of the story as to lie, as fatal to lack a vocabulary as to lack knowledge. In no case can you do more than convey an impression, so various and complex is the matter." In another place Wilson says, "When a historian has seen the truth, only half his work is done, and that not the more difficult half. He must then make others see it just as he does: only when he has done that has he told the truth." And our essayist-historian concludes: "There is an art of lying;—there is equally an art,—an infinitely more difficult art,—of telling the truth."

This art of telling the truth which is the writing of history is of transcendent importance. A knowledge of history is the very foundation of all knowledge. There is no science, no art which does not have its roots in history. Every field of knowledge—chemistry, philology, philosophy—represents the growth of the past; the process of learning is the process of getting acquainted with the accretions of the ages. Thus from one point of view all study is the study of history; at all events history is at the basis of all study.

Now, important though it is, history is never much read by anybody but historians unless it has some or all of these four literary excellencies: style, narrative power, ability in characterization and philosophical breadth.

I doubt whether one should say that this style or that is better for history. Style is the expression of personality, and a historian's personality is no more to be smothered than a poet's. Do we not know Herodotus, Gibbon, Green through their histories? Certainly we know Carlyle in his *French Revolution*: he is there the genius who "rides the tempest and directs the storm." And I will quote his dictum, "Histories are as perfect as the historian is wise." Style as an expression of personality has a place in history. The reader should feel the historian's own interest, or *he* will have none. That is an absurd dictum of the German historian Holm which runs: "The main purpose of history is the recording of facts, but the historian may sometimes be allowed to take a certain interest in them." Such a conception of the historian's office makes it ineffective if not useless. One stylistic quality that is especially aimed at in these days is what James Ford Rhodes has referred to as "rigorous conciseness." In his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1899 he called for "the compression of the narrative into the smallest compass *consistent with the life of the story*." With this proviso, the ideal is an admirable one: thus will the occasional turgidity of a Prescott be avoided, and the terseness of a Thucydides be approached.

Another quality I must mention as desirable in the style of historical writing: it is fancy. This would shock some historiographers, but I have good support for my predilection and opinion. I shall not be content with citing Carlyle's fancy, nor yet with the mention of Macaulay, but I shall go to Gibbon and Tacitus, and even to Herodotus and Thucydides. Gibbon describes the dome of St. Sophia's in Constantinople as "the earthly heaven, the second firmament, the vehicle of the cherubim, the throne of the glory of God." Tacitus says that Rome in the time of Nero was "the common sink into which everything infamous and abominable flows from all the quarters of the world." As for the Greek historians, their play of fancy is commonly in the orations and fables they quote. These things are not mere decoration; they appear as integral with the style of the more elevated passages, and they serve to vivify and even clarify the subject matter.

The necessity of a powerful narrative flow need not be insisted upon. Herodotus' description of Thermopolæ, or, better, Tacitus' story of the fire in Nero's Rome, or, still better, Macaulay's battle of the Boyne or trial of the seven bishops, may any of them be cited—and many other passages from the great historians. Lord Bryce, in his address at Union College in 1911 on "The Writing and Study of History" insists upon drama, "relief" (or emphasis) and rise and fall of style as desirable characteristics for historical writing. "Accuracy," he says, "may be just as well combined with animation"; and he praises Green's

Short History of the English People because it is "as fascinating as a novel."

When we come to the matter of characterization, we impinge upon biography, which is, however, inseparable from historical writing, for, as Carlyle says, "history is the essence of innumerable biographies." Among modern writers it was the Earl of Clarendon who, at the end of the 17th century first made portraits prominent in historical writing. And what unforgettable portraits—flaming cartoons, if you wish—Carlyle has fiercely daubed for us! Unforgettable, too, to the readers of John Richard Green are the portraits of Queen Elizabeth and William Pitt, to name but two. The panegyrics of Macaulay on William of Orange, and of Bancroft on William Penn may be prejudiced, but they are great pieces of work. Let us condemn the favoritism, admire the art, and credit the sincerity. Careful characterization, though more difficult in historical writing, is as necessary there as in the novel.

Lastly, the great historian has such a wide outlook, such a firm grasp upon the unity of historical development, that he can generalize upon his material. So vast is the field of history, that no one scholar can master it all (indeed it is doubtful if one man can really master more than a few years of it), but that historian commands our highest respect who has so thorough a general view of his whole field that he can deduce dependable conclusions from all the phenomena at his command. Justin Winsor admitted that his histories were "things of shreds and patches;"

but, said he, "human life is a thing of shreds and patches." Not at all; it is a thing of infinite relationships, of various interlocking systems of development. In his stimulating little book called *The Purpose of History*, Dean Woodbridge, while declining either to define or to admit historical progress, says that "the comparative study of history . . . reveals uniformities and sequences which promote our understanding and aid our practice." It is these uniformities and sequences that teach us the most; it is to a realization of them that we refer when we talk about "understanding history." Of course, we never fully understand; the ways of history are past finding out wholly; but the historian owes it to us to do something by way of interpreting, or at least of intelligibly correlating his "shreds and patches." One of the most extraordinary essays in the correlation of historical movements is Frederic Harrison's fifty-five page study, "The Connections of History." One may reject the author's belief in the orderliness of history (as he expresses it in another essay) but one must admire this masterly work of condensation. H. G. Wells' more extensive *Outline of History* is well worth study also, but as Prof. Davies suggests, "the author was inadequately equipped for his stupendous task, and the reader would do wisely to postpone a perusal of the work until he has already acquired a firm grasp of the main facts of history . . . when H. G. Wells will become a stimulating and challenging companion on the way." This whole matter of historical correlation and interpretation is highly

important, however, and upon a moderate success in it depends the ultimate value of historical writing.

I have now discussed four literary qualities of historical writing—style, narrative power, ability in characterization, and interpretative or philosophical breadth. I shall now make some attempt to answer two practical questions which I anticipate in relation to the reading of history.

First, what histories shall we read? Obviously, historians are not equal in dependability, in interest, or in literary skill. Modern historians themselves prefer Thucydides and Tacitus, said James Ford Rhodes in the address I have already referred to, with a third choice lying between Herodotus and Gibbon. Thucydides is preferred for his terse power and his more critical attitude, Tacitus (I take it) for his vividness. But after all, Herodotus, appropriately called the father of history, is more readable than any other classical historian except Tacitus. Herodotus is a peerless story-teller; he is *the* classical historian for the general reader; and one ought at least to read Church's *Stories* from his history. Gibbon's monumental *Decline and Fall* is likely to be unread because it is monumental, but if you do not read it all, you do owe it to yourself to read the first three chapters; the 17th, on Constantine; the 37th, on the conversion of the barbarians; and the 68th, on the siege of Constantinople. Macaulay was one of the world's great writers of history. Historians are wont to sneer at him because his Whig sympathies colored his writing; but, as Mr. Rhodes says, "you soon

learn how to take him." No other piece of historical writing has ever been so popular with the general reader as his *History of England*. "I shall not be satisfied," the historian wrote to a friend, "unless I produce a work which shall for a few days supersede the latest popular novel on the table of the fashionable young lady." Laboring men clubbed together to buy and read it as it appeared. It is only a fragment, but it is unsurpassed for vividness and vigor. Carlyle is another historical writer who has come under the displeasure of the shreds-and-patches historiographers; yet he fares rather well, I believe, with most critics these days, for he is frankly a romantic historian. Harrison calls his *Cromwell* "one of the most splendid monuments of historical genius." I know of no more extraordinary or thrilling book of history than his *French Revolution*. "You have not had for a hundred years," Carlyle shouts, "a book that comes more direct and flaming from the heart of living man!" In every page one feels the truth of that assertion. And as for the violent style, you may like it; at least you will become accustomed to it. Of more recent English historians, J. R. Green, with his emphasis on social history, has had the widest influence, and is very readable.

Among American historians, Prescott may be mentioned first. His style is somewhat stilted, but his pictures have vividness and power. Motley, in his *Dutch Republic*, writes as a partisan, but he possesses an extraordinary ability to take his reader with him. John Fiske was distinctly a literary historian, and Edward Eggleston in his

Beginners of a Nation has vigor, freshness, and charm. Francis Parkman has a considerable claim upon the foremost position among American historians: in his work one may find that marriage of truth and beauty from which issues the finest historical writing. Woodrow Wilson's *Division and Reunion* in the Epochs of American History series is a model of style in historical writing of the handbook type. Another president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, has a far longer and more ambitious work in *The Winning of the West*; in connection with it I may mention that recent admirable history by F. L. Paxson, *The American Frontier*. Henry Adams' *Mont Saint Michel* is undoubtedly one of the finest pieces of historical writing yet produced in America. And finally, there is that readable and reliable (O happy alliteration!) series published by the Yale Press—*Chronicles of America*.

The second question I wish at least partially to answer is this one: what *aids* are there for historical reading? The best guide to such reading that I know is W. Watkin Davies' *How to Read History*, in Doran's Modern Readers' Bookshelf series. Such a guide is helpful, but not necessary. A good atlas, preferably one with historical maps, is necessary, however. Let me make one further suggestion: try to correlate works of biography, fiction, drama, poetry, and art with your history. I have said that history is literature; I might also say that literature and art are history. In them you find an excellent record of the past. For example, suppose you choose the period of the

American Civil War, and use James Ford Rhodes' history as a basis. You could then read Stephenson's or Tarbell's *Lincoln*, Grant's *Memoirs*, and Dodd's *Jefferson Davis* in biography; Churchill's *The Crisis* and De Forest's *Miss Ravenel's Conversion* (a contemporary novel) in fiction; Brownell's *Battle-Songs*, Whitman's *Drum-Taps* and Simms' *War Poetry of the South* for verse; Drinkwater's *Lincoln* and the same author's *Lee* in drama; Lincoln's speeches and messages; Gideon Welles' diary; and last but not least, the bound volumes of *Harper's Weekly*, which furnish a pictorial history of the war. These various elements of history will give you a richer and more varied knowledge than the mere reading of a historical account, however good. Some day motion pictures will be an invaluable aid in historical study, and I must not forget to mention that the singing of the old songs of the period is a help in the imaginative reconstruction of the times.

I urge you to read history in this way so that you may imaginatively experience it, realizing the background, knowing the people and loving or hating them, visualizing the scene and the action. Mere facts will not mean much to you unless there is some feeling behind them. But if you plunge into the fray with Leonidas, if you are in the mob that storms the Bastille, if you listen to Pontiac's oration, the history of these incidents of the past will become a part of your experience. Only by such imaginative immersion in the past as I have suggested do we achieve any real knowledge of

history. Such a realization, moreover, brings a high pleasure to the reader; and let it not be held as a reproach that one should desire pleasure from reading of history; let him even demand it as his right.

BOOK LIST V

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VI. BIOGRAPHY

Throughout all literature runs one recurring theme, sometimes less prominent, sometimes overflowing all else; but never itself quite submerged. This theme is personality. Personality appears in three ways in literature: first, in the character of the author; second, in the reader himself; and, third, in the people who are written about.

Try as he may the author cannot keep himself out of his writing; and, generally speaking, it may be said that he would better not try. Novelists put themselves into their stories inevitably: Poe is in nearly every tale he ever wrote; Dickens reappears regularly in his own fiction as boy, law-clerk, writer; Tolstoy habitually painted his own portrait into his novels; all fiction writers portray themselves more or less clearly in their own work. Essays afford peculiarly intimate views of their authors, revealing every idiosyncrasy. Even history betrays unavoidably its author's habit of mind, his moral bias, and his tastes. Poetry, quite as much as prose, is personal; indeed, lyric verse is the very singing-voice of the poet's heart. And if the subject matter does not betray the author, his style at least is telltale. "In the art we can no-wise forget the artist," says Carlyle. The author must needs write himself: if you would hide yourself from the world, never put pen to

paper. Pseudonyms, anonymity, may conceal your name from the public, but once you have laid yourself out in printers' ink, your soul is no longer your own.

Second, personality gets into literature by means of the reader. No way has ever been discovered (nor ever will be) to convey a thought or feeling directly and exactly from the mind of the writer to that of the reader; it is bound to undergo a transformation as it comes into another mind. Mark Twain put himself into Huckleberry Finn as he wrote about him: we put ourselves into Huck as we read about him. We become not only co-authors in recreating the scenes of the book, but we become the characters themselves. It is all a play of personalities.

Now, not only do personalities come into literature by way of the author and the reader, but they come in as the subject matter of writing. That is, they are characters in a story, personages in history. Here, though they are not free of connection with the writer or the reader, as we have seen, each has a certain entity and individuality of his own. The white magic of literary art brings these characters upon the stage, whether it is in fiction, history, poetry, drama, or biography.

As for the last-named—biography—its business is mainly with these characters; and that is the reason that I have taken the space, in introducing my essay on the reading of biography, to point out the literary importance of personality. Before proceeding to designate some things to be looked for in biography, I wish to insist on

the sheer importance of human personality in itself as a subject for literary treatment. When Frederic Harrison condemns the biographers who write of characters that are not "noble," with their "memories of the unmemorable"; when Miss Agnes Repplier, in her essay on biography, speaks of "people whose insignificant lives need never have been written"; when Cowper calls the *Biographia Brittanica*

"A fond attempt to give a deathless lot
To names ignoble, born to be forgot,"

indeed, whenever I read such expressions of contempt for obscure persons, I grow indignant at the philosophy of snobbery implied. What human lives are insignificant, pray? None whatever; not one. A biography of my butcher, if it were adequately done, would be worth quite as much to me as the biography of any one of a dozen presidents of the United States I could name. This is not mere democratic fervor: I mean that the interpretation of a real personality has an intrinsic importance founded in our common humanity: we are and we should be interested in how *any* man solves his problems and acquits himself in his battles. My butcher may not have left as much impress upon the political pull-and-haul of his times as Franklin Pierce, for example, but we may learn as much from his life of social forces, of human reactions, of psychology and sociology, and even of philosophy, as from a more prominent career. "I embrace the common," said Emerson; "I sit at the feet of the familiar and the low."

Howells says of the realist in fiction: "In life he finds nothing insignificant; all tells for destiny and character; nothing that God made is contemptible." This is not the philosophy of realistic fiction alone; it is the philosophy of science, which finds all phenomena equally important, and it may well be the philosophy of biography. When Kant set out to write his *Critique of Pure Reason* he is said to have proposed to himself a task in metaphysics analogous to that which Copernicus had performed in astronomy: as Copernicus had established the sun as the center of the planetary system, so Kant would establish man as the center of the universe. I think literature is pretty thoroughly committed to this view of man's importance, and I think that biography, in particular, cannot escape it. Mere manhood, noble or ignoble, revered or despised, exalted or obscure, is interesting to us and worthy our attention. "Damaged souls" are still souls. We shall always need great biographies of famous men (that goes without saying); but let us hope also for great biographies of obscure men. These latter are harder to get, and they are likely to come to us as more or less accidental autobiographies or journals, like those of W. N. P. Barbellion, or Marie Bashkirtseff.

The first requirement of biography is, of course, the creation of a living, breathing picture of the man. The details of his appearance, his mannerisms, his habit of thought, his attitude toward other men and toward the problems of life in general help to give us a perfect impression of him.

The immense detail of Boswell's *Life of Johnson* accounts for much of its success. Further, just as the novelist employs conversation for characterization, so does Boswell. "I was very assiduous in recording his conversation," says the biographer; and we have Johnson's dogmatic assertions beginning "Sir, . . ." — the very manner and dialect of the man. We must be made, too, to follow the psychology of our hero; we must get inside his brain as we get inside that of a character in a George Eliot novel; we must understand his motives. In all great biographies there has been inquiry into certain psychological qualities and into training and motives, but not until recent years has there been an effort to apply more or less scientific principles to such analyses. "The constant direction in the art of biography," writes William Roscoe Thayer, in his little book on that art, "has been from the outward to the inward." Always, of course, there is the danger of generalizing on insufficient data, and the other one of emphasizing and suppressing for the sake of a thesis. Some of our recent critics have attempted rather absurdly to plumb the depths of the subconscious minds of certain writers on the basis of data gathered from their writings. They are especially happy if they can "scandalize" their heroes. Oh, these doctors who look at literature and think they explain a great personality by means of a polysyllabic term out of a medical dictionary! Keith Preston disposed of them once and for all, it strikes me, in his devastating quatrain:

“The doctor looked at literature,
And literature looked at the doc;
Upon my soul I cannot tell
Which got the biggest shock!”

But the value to biography of careful and conscientious psychological analysis, such as that found in Gamaliel Bradford's "psychographies," for example, is beyond question. A fine example of it is found, too, in a recent autobiography—Sherwood Anderson's *A Story Teller's Story*.

Full and fair treatment of personality in biography requires the statement of many very intimate details, and raises the question of suppression. Moore has been criticised for destroying some of Byron's correspondence before he published his life of his friend. On the other hand, Froude was severely condemned for printing certain details of Carlyle's churlishness, spite, and truculence. On the whole the Froudes must be conceded to have the better conception of a biographer's duty. Dr. Johnson once asserted, "If a man is to write a *panegyrick* he may keep the vices out of sight, but if he professes to write a *life* he must represent it really as it was." We do not desire idealized portraits, but true ones; or if we do desire the pretty masks, we should not have them. Wordsworth is less a god but more a man since the recent revelations concerning his early life. Eginhard's stories of the human weaknesses of Charlemagne may have given H. G. Wells an opportunity to attack a character he does not fancy, but they make Charlemagne more real to us than any heroics could.

It is no small help to the painting of a portrait to show the relations of our man with those around him. The effect he produced on others may tell us more about him than all the story of his own acts. Besides this, the writer may take the opportunity to become more than a biographer—to move over the line into history. The danger here is in covering up our hero in a mass of detail; yet some of the great biographies have been of this kind: Masson's admirable *Life of Milton and History of His Time* in seven large volumes, Lockhart's life of Scott in five equally large books, and Nicolay and Hay's *Lincoln* in ten volumes. Of course much of this bulk is caused by the inclusion of many letters and papers. But in biography proper, happy is the writer who can indicate brilliantly the times of his hero as a setting, and then make him walk and act and speak therein, a real and human personality. To recreate the hero as he was in his life, and to make him so actual to us that we can see and hear and understand him: that is the triumph of the biographer.

The great biographers have done it, beginning with Plutarch. Of course, beginnings in biography go back much earlier than Plutarch. Mr. Thayer, for instance, in his little book *The Art of Biography* goes back to the story of Joseph the Hebrew, as one well may. But firsts are very uncertain and rather vain subjects for speculation, and Plutarch at least demands our attention. His *Parallel Lives of the Ancient Greeks and Romans* come down to us from the second century of the Christian era. Plutarch arranged his subjects in

pairs—a Greek soldier with a Roman soldier, a Greek orator with a Roman orator, and so on, making forty-six fairly short biographies. They are interesting narratives, liberally besprinkled with well-told anecdotes and pithy observations. Plutarch was something of a philosopher, and the one other book of his besides the *Lives* that we remember is a series of essays of practical wisdom known as the *Morals*. But the ethical commentary in the *Lives* is not tiresome; it is too concise for that. It is apt to take the form of apothegms. For example, when Cæsar was insidiously increasing his political power in Rome before he was elected tribune, his enemies gave little attention: “They were aware too late,” says Plutarch, “that there is no beginning so mean which continued application will not make considerable, and that despising a danger at first will make it at last irresistible.” But it is the abundance of anecdotes that has made Plutarch popular. It would be wrong to think that the purpose of these little stories is merely to hold the interest, however; they certainly do much to characterize. What a light is thrown on Cæsar when we are told the story of how he wept when he read the history of Alexander. “Do you think,” said he, “I have not just cause to weep when I consider that Alexander at my age had conquered many nations, and I have all this time done nothing that is memorable?” Of course, Plutarch is not always reliable, but he was sincere and apparently conscientious. Popularity is sometimes interpreted as a stigma upon a historian or biographer, but scholars assure us

that the popular Plutarch was industrious in research and had a great background of learning.

To reach the next biography I wish to refer to, we shall have to overleap some seventeen centuries. That rather tremendous feat brings us to Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*. This is one of the great books of the English language, and its finest achievement is this: in it we get to know Johnson—his carelessness in dress, his fearlessness of men and his fear of death, his kindness to the unfortunate, his way of saying "heerd" for "heard," his manner of eating, his opinions on ten thousand subjects. We disagree with him; we laugh at him; we grow angry at him; but we love him. "Sir," said he, "I look upon every day as lost in which I do not make a new acquaintance." And again we get a view of the man when we hear him say, "Sir, there is nothing yet contrived by man by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern." An actor had planned to lampoon him upon the stage, and so Johnson bought himself several stout oak sticks—and that was the end of the lampoon. And so on, and so on, with never-failing vivacity, interest, and intellectual stimulus; Boswell merely allows his hero to talk and act, and the greatest of English biographies is the result. Perfect simplicity, perfect art. "I will venture to say," declares Boswell in his introduction, "that Dr. Johnson will be seen in this work more completely than any man who has yet lived." Some five generations of readers have sustained this claim, and we find Professor Cross in his entertaining *Outline of Biography*

from *Plutarch* to *Strachey* summing up critical opinion upon the great biography almost in the words of its author's boast.

Trevelyan's *Macaulay* is one of the great English biographies of the nineteenth century. It includes many of Macaulay's letters, and entries from his diary, which produce much of the charm of the work, and it gives us an incomparably distinct view of a great man. He was six years old when his parents took him to dine with friends, and a servant spilled hot soup on him, scalding him badly. His hostess cared for him, and was pitying and petting him, when he observed with dignity, "Madam, the agony is abated." Macaulay's precocity, his phenomenal memory, his propensity for novel-reading and his weeping over the death of *Clarissa Harlowe*, his puns, his quarrels and hatreds, and his tenderness toward those near to him—these things, with the activities of a great statesman, orator, essayist, and historian, furnish out a remarkable biography.

One of the best of recent biographies is Albert Bigelow Paine's *Mark Twain*. It is not, of course, the last word on the great humorist, but it is adequate as a portrait, important as a comment on the times of its subject, and absorbing as literature. The incident I remember best, I believe, is the home-coming of Mark and his bride the evening of their wedding. They were married at Elmira, but they were to live at Buffalo, and the whole wedding party accompanied them to their new home. Mark had commissioned his friend Slee to pick them out a boarding house, and he was amazed

when he was conducted to a fine house, ablaze with lights and decorations, and with servants awaiting them. "Don't you understand, Youth?" said his bride to Mark ("Youth" was always her name for him)—"Don't you understand, Youth? It is all ours—everything—a gift from father!" But even then Mark could not realize his good fortune—and did not until Mr. Langdon, his father-in-law, presented the key of the house to him. A little later, when he had gained control of himself, he said, "Mr. Langdon, whenever you are in Buffalo, if it's twice a year, come right here. Bring your bag and stay overnight, if you want to. It shan't cost you a cent." Mark Twain's enthusiasms, his noble achievement in paying off his great debt after his bankruptcy, his extraordinary spirit, his genius, his indignations—these are some of the elements in an admirable portrait. Who will forget the picture of Mark lounging in bed, as he loved to do, receiving visitors, dictating in his drawling voice, smoking, tossing his great mane of white hair back from his brilliant eyes?

Three recent biographies I cannot forbear to mention, though I cannot here enlarge upon them: Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria*, Albert J. Beveridge's great life of Marshall, and Carl Sandburg's fascinating and poetic *Lincoln*.

Closely associated with biography is autobiography, which I propose to discuss in the next chapter, together with diaries and letters, which have an interest of their own. Besides these types of writing, I should mention the class of romantic

"lives," which bear the same relation to biography as historical novels do to history. Miss Atherton's story of Hamilton in *The Conqueror*, Miss Rives' Byron in *The Castaway*, Mr. Batcheller's Lincoln in *A Man for the Ages*, and M. Maurois' Shelley in *Ariel* are examples.

This leads me to give the same advice as to reading biography that I gave in relation to reading history. Correlate; make fiction, poetry, drama, art, and history aids to each other. Further, take sides; let your emotions enlist you on Hamilton's side as against Burr, on Macaulay's as against Croker. And above all (and this advice is unnecessary to a good reader) put yourself in the place of the hero. What would I have done in his place? Would I have measured up? Would I perhaps have failed where this man failed? This vicarious experience is one of the greatest opportunities that literature affords. There you imaginatively measure yourself. It is in this opportunity that the great moral purpose of biography appears. Measure yourself by Southey's Nelson, for instance, who died on the *Victory's* deck saying, "Thank God, I have done my duty!" or by the noble example of Washington in Irving's great biography of that hero, who could say on his death-bed, "I am not afraid to go." In closing, I should like to let Plutarch, one of the first as one of the greatest of biographers, state his purpose in this kind of writing, as he does in introducing his life of Pericles: "Virtue, by the bare statement of its actions, can so affect men's minds as to create at once both admiration of things done and desire

to imitate the doers of them. . . . Moral good is a practical stimulus; it is no sooner seen than it inspires an impulse to practice. . . . And so we have thought fit to spend our time and pains in writing the lives of famous persons. . . . ”

BOOK LIST VI

There is a good little bibliography on this subject in Wilbur L. Cross's *Outline of Biography* (Holt). Following are some attractive biographies:

- Abbott, Lyman, *Life and Letters of Paul the Apostle*. Houghton.
- Begbie, Harold, *Life of William Booth*. Macmillan.
- Beveridge, A. J., *John Marshall*. (4 vols.) Houghton.
- Bisland, Elizabeth, *Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn*. Constable, London.
- Bradford, G., *The Soul of Samuel Pepys; Damaged Souls; American Portraits*. Houghton.
- Charnwood, Lord, *Abraham Lincoln*. Holt.
- Forster, Jno., *Life of Dickens*. Scribner.
- Higginson, T. W., *Contemporaries*. Houghton.
- Hutchinson, Lucy, *Memoirs of Col. Hutchinson*. Ev.
- Irving, Washington, *Life of Washington*. Putnam.
- Johnson, Samuel, *Lives of the Poets*. Oxford Press.
- Lee, Sidney, *Life of Shakespeare*. Macmillan.
- Lockhart, J. G., *Sir Walter Scott* (5 vols.) Houghton.
- Morley, Jno., *Life of W. E. Gladstone*. Macmillan.
- Page, T. N., *Robert E. Lee*. Scribner.
- Paine, A. B., *Life of Mark Twain* (3 vols.) Harpers.
- Palmer, Geo. H., *Life of Alice Freeman Palmer*. Houghton.
- Papini, G., *Life of Christ*. Harcourt.
- Plutarch, *Lives* (3 vols.) Ev.
- Sabatien, Paul, *Life of St. Francis*. Scribner.

- Scott, Walter, *Lives of the Novelists*. Ev.
Southey, Robt., *Life of Nelson*. Ev.
Stephenson, N. W., *Lincoln*. Bobbs Merrill.
Strachey, Lytton, *Queen Victoria*. Harcourt.
Tarbell, Ida, *Life of Lincoln* (2 vols.). N. Y.: Lincoln Memorial Association.
Thayer, Wm. Roscoe, *Life of John Hay; Life and Times of Cavour* (Each 2 vols.). Houghton.
Trevelyan, George Otto, *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*. (2 vols.). Harper.
Vallery-Radot, M. R., *Life of Pasteur*. Doubleday.
Warner, C. D., *Life of Irving*. Houghton.
Werner, M. R., *Barnum; Brigham Young*. Harcourt.
Wilson, Woodrow, *George Washington*. Harper.
Wister, Owen, *U. S. Grant*. Beacon Biographies. Small Maynard.

VII. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LITERATURE

There are readers who feel that there is something not quite respectable about the vertical pronoun; there are those who condemn out of hand the writer who sows I's thickly upon his page. I remember one young man who once acknowledged to me a dislike for Benjamin Franklin because he had shown himself "egotistical" by writing a book about himself. "But my dear fellow," I protested, "what a subject he had!" For my part, I have no objection to a man's having a high opinion of himself if he can win me over to that opinion. Moreover, he need not be a great or famous man, if he consent to be interesting and, in some way or other, important. The definition of greatness is a difficult one to make, and fame gives no true importance to a man. Two things we require of the man who writes his own life, and they are the things we require of all writers: that he shall have something significant to say, and that he shall say it well. If he fulfill these conditions, let him begin his every sentence with "I" and we shall not like him the worse for it.

This is but another statement of the view of the importance of personality which I emphasized in discussing biography. The close connection between biography and autobiography is, I am sure, entirely obvious; but less apparent is the radical difference between these two types of

writing. The fact is that the biographer's affinity is with the historian, while the autobiographer takes his place with diarists and letter-writers. The biographer looks at his hero and his hero's times from the outside, regarding the whole objectively as a subject of research; while the man who writes his own life is merely unrolling his recollections, and the source of all the web he spins is within him. As a result, the biographer has to strive hard to capture the personality of his subject, while the autobiographer, unless he is a very dull or dishonest fellow, has only to spin it out. It is because of this difference in viewpoint, too, that autobiographies and reminiscences are notoriously inaccurate; the writers of them do not have the indefatigable spirit of the researcher. For this reason, one may doubt the soundness of Doctor Johnson's dictum that every man is his own best biographer. Besides, a man's estimate of himself is likely to be faulty; he has no perspective. Oliver Wendell Holmes, it will be recalled, pointed out that there were three Johns: "the real John, known only to his Maker; John's ideal John, never the real one, and often very unlike him; and Thomas's ideal John, never the real John, nor John's John, but often very unlike either." He might have added others to his catalogue, as John's partner's John, Mrs. John's John, and John's pastor's John. But the John who concerns us here is his biographer's John, who, it must be acknowledged, is also likely to be very far from the John who is "known only to his Maker." And, in spite of the obviously

imperfect conceptions which attend the writing of autobiography, if John himself is honest and able, his own John is likely to surpass his biographer's in one respect at least—in the more general truth that transcends mere fact to reproduce the spirit of the writer's character and times. Nor is his partisanship or favoritism an important objection: since he is writing autobiography we expect that, and allow for it.

The essential qualities of autobiography are easy enough to discern: the first of them is candor. The man who writes merely to exalt himself is not candid, and he does indeed nauseate us by this egoism; the great autobiographies are those which are also confessions—Rousseau's, Cellini's, Franklin's, Carlyle's. Secondly, they must emphasize the ideas by which the lives which they recount were motivated; and those ideas must be important. No book without ideas is interesting, certainly; nor is a life that is rudderless likely to hold our attention. Franklin's principles as he sets them forth from time to time are among the most interesting things in his *Autobiography*: Peter Cartwright's religious enthusiasm actuates his whole racy narrative; De Quincey's analysis of the development of his mental traits—subtle, morbid, brilliant, selfish as they were—is the great theme in his *Autobiographical Sketches and Confessions*. I may also mention, in speaking of richness of ideas in autobiography, Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, and the more recent *Education of Henry Adams*. Thirdly, and (so far as this list is concerned) lastly, a successful autobi-

ography will probably show skill in painting a picture and in narrating events, and a richness in anecdote. What life there is in the adventures that the vain and sometimes ridiculous Lord Herbert of Cherbury recounts! Or to come some three centuries nearer our own times, how vivid and feeling is the story of pioneer Iowa life in Hamlin Garland's *A Son of the Middle Border!* And I own to an enthusiasm for that too-little-appreciated classic, Davy Crockett's *Autobiography*, with its racy dialect and good stories.

These three qualities—candor, ideas, and skill in description and narration—are found in all the great autobiographies. Look, for example, at the autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini. This is one of the most amazing and fascinating books ever written. Cellini was a sixteenth-century goldsmith of undoubted genius, and a swaggering braggadocio who got himself into one brawl after another through his political and amorous intrigues, and got himself out of them by the skillful use of a good sword and a disregard of life. A favorite at times of popes, cardinals and kings, a heroic soldier, a not-too-constant lover, a musician, a sculptor, a rowdy, a courtier, Cellini is remembered for two achievements: his works in gold, silver, and bronze, and a memoir which is one of the great autobiographies of the world. This book presents a composite picture of the society of the renaissance which is incomparable, and it is more interesting than most novels.

A great contrast is presented by the sober *Memoir* of Edward Gibbon, the historian of the

decline of Rome. And yet this book, which may be read at a sitting, has a nobility and power that make it memorable. Gibbon's unprofitable days at Oxford, his love for the lady who later became Madame Necker, and the inception and conclusion of his great history are unforgettable. "It was at Rome," he writes, "as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the Decline and Fall of the city first started to my mind." How different from Cellini's impetuous style are these words of grand simplicity!

The greatest of American autobiographies is that of Benjamin Franklin. Every schoolboy is familiar with Franklin's entrance into Philadelphia, and his progress up Market Street holding one huge roll under each arm while he ate a third, with his plans for moral improvement, his philanthropies, his public projects and inventions, his frank confessions of "errata," and the details of his earlier political life.

With these great autobiographies one inevitably connects certain great diaries, for the diary and autobiography are two manifestations of the same desire of a writer to explain himself and relate his experiences and observations. The diary differs from other writings in the fact that it is composed in periodical entries, and occasionally, I suppose, not intended for other eyes than those of the writer. Probably most published diaries were written with some thought of publication, but we know that Pepys' great work lay in unsolved cipher for a hundred and fifty years.

Do you keep a diary? I suppose most people do at some time or other in their lives. Why do they do it? Sometimes to preserve stray ideas, as in a commonplace book like Emerson's or Thoreau's journals, with the expectation of joining the thoughts together later in essays perhaps; sometimes to record a series of important events, like Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle* or the *Journals of General Gordon at Khartoum*; sometimes to preserve for the writer's old age, or for the interest of his children, the events, ideas, scenes, and circumstances that have made up, in all their variety, the round of his existence. A certain aunt of mine kept a diary to read over, she said, sometime in the future when she might be "laid up with a broken leg." There is no need to try to analyze here the motives at the basis of this diary habit which so many of us contract. The questions that interest us are: Is the diary valuable? Is it literature? The answer to both questions is, of course, that some are, and some are not. They often deal with very trifling matters. "Up betimes," Pepys begins many an entry, and occasionally, "Up mighty betimes." Byron, George Eliot and Barbellion give many details about their health. Most diarists pay some attention to the weather. Are these negligible details? By no means. Dr. Johnson was right when, in advising Boswell to keep a journal, he said, "There is nothing, Sir, too little for so little a creature as man." It is the little things that reveal us. And a diary which reveals a human personality as does that of the Swiss Amiel, for example, or that of Samuel

Pepys, or that of Carolyn Fox, is something that "the world will not willingly let die."

By general consent Pepys is the foremost of English diarists. His spontaneity, his zest, his utter frankness, and his style (now quaint) commend him to all readers. We love him most, I think, for his weaknesses. "I was angry with my wife," he writes, "for her things lying about, and in my passion kicked the little fine basket which I bought her in Holland and broke it, which troubled me after I had done it." And again, in regard to his servant, "I sent my boy home for some papers, when he staying longer than I would have him, I became angry and boxed my boy when he came that I did hurt my thumb so much that I was not able to stir all the day after and in great pain." And once more: "What at dinner and supper I drank I know not how, of my own accord, so much wine that I was even almost foxed and my head ached all night; so home and to bed without prayers, which I never did yet since I came to the house of a Sunday night; I being now so out of order that I durst not read prayers for fear of being perceived by my servants in what case I was." Very frequent are Pepys' references to his clothes, for he was a lover of gay raiment. He loved "musique" and the theater too, though he did think *Midsommer Night's Dream* "the most insipid, ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life." But Pepys was not a mere trifler: he was secretary of the Admiralty, member of Parliament, president of the Royal Society—a man of position and of parts. He

records his official activities daily, as well as minor matters. His account of the great plague, and better yet that of the London fire of 1666 are perhaps the most brilliant parts of the diary.

Pepys' diary covers but ten years; that of B. R. Haydon, the painter, covers his whole life. Haydon's diary is an extraordinary work—violent, highly-colored, but affording a remarkable record of an unusual man. It is available in part in the life of Haydon by Tom Taylor. Its author was an intimate friend of such men as Lamb, Keats, Shelley, and Wordsworth; but our chief interest must be in this tremendous fellow Haydon himself, who one day is "like a man with air-ballons under his armpits and ether in his soul," as he says, and the next is in prison and despair. Then one day he writes a "finis" and a "God forgive me!" and cuts his throat. It is natural to compare Barbellion's *Journal of a Disappointed Man*, which is more consistently pessimistic, with the Haydon diary.

But even when the tragic note is struck, there is something enchanting about diaries. It is the charm of personality—the ineluctable fascination of a human soul revealed, and revealed by mere words—mere paper and ink—but revealed in the action of your imagination or mine as we pore over diaries penned originally by men who lived and played and worked and suffered far away and long ago.

Letters are another literary form that reveals personality freely. "The true life of a man," wrote Cardinal Newman, "is in his letters." And

Lowell asks, concerning the letters of a certain contemporary: "Do you find the real inside of him in his letters?" and adds,— "This is a pretty sure test." It is a sure test, and the most important one. We reject the poet Bryant's letters, for instance, because they are cold and impersonal; while we welcome Dick Steele's impulsive notes to his "dear Prue," and Cowper's intimate revelations. I doubt, however, whether passionate love-letters should ever be published. Here is a case where "three is a crowd"; and a third reader is a kind of peeping Tom. The letters of passion written by the greatest man to the noblest woman are pretty sure to look rather silly in cold print, though certainly the letters of Héloïse and Abélard are an immortal exception. Self revelation is one quality that we require, then; another is brilliance of style. The best letters are brilliant, clever, and witty; and they must have, too, an abundance of ideas. The great letter-writers are many sided men, like the great essayists, and their letters are chock-full and running over with thought, observations on life, fancy. Good letter-writers cerebrate; there are no lazy minds among them; they cerebrate, and they scintillate. If I had to name three qualities of great letters I should list these three; self-revelation, brilliance of style, and profusion of ideas.

One of the foremost of English epistolizers is Horace Walpole. Now Walpole was not a great man; he was not profound; he was a dilettante. But, as Thackeray says, "Fiddles sing all through his letters; wax-lights, fine dresses, fine jokes,

fine coaches glitter and sparkle there. Never was such a Vanity Fair as that through which he leads us." I should like to print here one of his vivacious letters, but it would take a little too much space, and to quote a sentence or two would not be fair. I would better go on to speak of Lord Byron's letters. I know of no letters more readable than Byron's. Brilliant and self-revelatory they are to a degree; and there are also some fine descriptions of his travels, comparable to those in the letters of the poet Gray. Here is a paragraph from a letter of his to his publisher-friend, John Murray: "I am out of sorts, out of nerves; and now and then (I begin to fear) out of my senses. All this Italy has done for me, and not England; I defy all of you, and your climate to boot, to make me mad. But if ever I do really become a Bedlamite, and wear a strait waistcoat, let me be brought back among *you*; your people will then be proper company."

Franklin and Lowell are perhaps the best of American letter-writers, though I have a great liking for that letter of Emerson to Henry Ware in which he finds it "droll" to be considered a heretic, and refuses to be drawn into controversy. There are letters, too, of Irving, Willis, Holmes, Whittier, Thoreau, and Whitman, that should be remembered. Certain letters of Emily Dickinson are among the most poignant ever penned, and among letters recently published those of Walter Hines Page are very rewarding. Everybody writes letters; they are the one universal literary form; and it is illuminating to read those of states-

men, like Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Gladstone, Napoleon. I remember a letter of Washington's in which he refuses to advise a relative in regard to matrimony because he sagely concludes such advice to be superfluous. Such a letter tells us much about the real Washington. Browsing among the letters of the great and the near-great is a rewarding and a diverting occupation.

Which leads me to say that letters and diaries, as a rule, require less of application in the reading of them than any other form of literature. "Some books are to be tasted," says Bacon, and letters and diaries commonly need less "chewing" than fiction, essays, history, or poetry. They are for more leisure hours, for "night-caps" before retiring, for railroad journeys or hammock-reading. They are fragmentary, full of the concrete, and have less of philosophic generalization and connected reasoning than other literature. Therefore, do not hesitate to skip when the spirit prompts you to skipping. Never tire yourself at reading diaries and letters: don't let Pepys or Walpole wear out their welcome.

And one other bit of advice: imitate. We all write letters; but how artificial and banal most of them are! Do not strain after another's style, but imitate the ease and spontaneity of the great letter-writer. "To write letters well," wrote Lord Chesterfield to his son, "you must write with ease and naturalness." And I hope you will not laugh at me when I advise you to keep a diary of your own. It will be valuable to you as earnest readers of literature, if for no other reason. Notes upon

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what you have read will set your opinions in order, and fix the thoughts that have passed through your mind in your memory. As Arthur Ponsonby, in his fascinating book on English diaries, says, it is not lack of time but lack of persistence that prevents our keeping diaries. *You* can keep a good diary, because you are an interesting person—to yourself at least. And so I close this chapter with the advice not only to read diaries and letters, but to write them as well.

BOOK LIST VII

The one best book on English Diaries is Arthur Ponsonby's with that name. Good short general collections of letters are *Nineteenth Century Letters*, edited by B. J. Rees (Mod. Students L.), *The Gentlest Art*, edited by E. V. Lucas (Macmillan), and *Letters from Many Pens*, edited by M. Coult (Macmillan Pocket Cl.).

This list is divided into three parts devoted respectively to autobiography, diaries, and letters.

Part I

Abbott, Lyman, *Reminiscences*. Houghton; *Silhouettes of My Contemporaries*. Doubleday.

Adams, Henry, *The Education of Henry Adams* (2 vols.). Houghton.

Addams, Jane, *Twenty Years at Hull House*. Macmillan.

Anderson, Sherwood, *A Story Teller's Story*. Huebsch.

Antin, Mary, *The Promised Land*. Houghton.

Blaine, J. G., *Twenty Years in Congress*. Henry Bill Pub. Co., Norwich, Conn.

Bok, Edward, *The Americanization of Edward Bok*. Scribner.

Carlyle, Thos., *Reminiscences*. Macmillan.

Carnegie, Andrew, *Autobiography*. Houghton.

- Cartwright, Peter, *Autobiography*. Cranston.
 Cellini, Benvenuto, *Autobiography*. Ev.
 Cibber, Colley, *Apology*. Ev.
 Clark, Champ, *My Quarter Century of Politics* (2 vols.). Harper.
 Corbett, Jas. J., *The Roar of the Crowd*. Putnam.
 Crockett, David, *Autobiography*. Mod. Students L.
 Depew, Chauncey M., *My Memories of Eighty Years*. Scribner.
 Garland, Hamlin, *A Son of the Middle Border*. Macmillan.
 Gibbon, Edward, *Memoir*. Ev.
 Grant, U. S., *Memoirs*. Century.
 Hale, E. E., *A New England Boyhood*. Little, Brown.
 Hudson, W. H., *Far Away and Long Ago*. Dutton.
 Jefferson, Jos., *Autobiography*. Century.
 Keller, Helen, *The Story of My Life*. Houghton.
 Larcom, Lucy, *A New England Girlhood*. Houghton.
 Matthews, Brander, *These Many Years*. Scribner.
 Mill, John Stuart, *Autobiography*. Harvard Cl., Collier.
 Muir, John, *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth*. Houghton.
 Paton, John G., *Autobiography*. Revell.
 Riis, Jacob, *The Making of an American*. Macmillan.
 Roosevelt, Theodore, *Autobiography*. Macmillan.
 Stefansson, V., *My Life with the Esquimo*. Macmillan.
 Steiner, E. A., *From Alien to Citizen*. Revell.
 Washington, Booker T., *Up From Slavery*. Lambskin L., Doubleday.
 Winter, Wm., *Old Friends*. Moffat, Yard.
 Woolman, Jno. *Journal*. Ev.

Part II

- Amiel, H. F., *Journal* (2 vols.). Houghton.
 Barbellion, W. N. P., *Journal of a Disappointed Man*. Doran.

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- Bashkirtseff, Marie, *Journal of a Young Artist*. Cassell.
 Burney, Fanny, *Diaries and Letters*. Macmillan.
 Cheney, Ednah D., *Louisa May Alcott: Her Life, Letters and Journals*. Little, Brown Co.
 Emerson, R. W., *Journals* (10 vols.). Houghton.
 Evelyn, John, *Diary*. Ev.
 Hawthorne, Nathaniel, *Passages from the American Note-books*. Houghton.
 Pepys, Samuel, *Diary* (2 vols.) (Ev.)
 Robinson, H. Crabb, *Diary and Correspondence*. Macmillan.
 Swift, Jonathan, *Journal to Stella*. Ev.
 Wesley, John, *Journals* (4 vols.). Ev.

Part III

- Arnold, Matthew, *Letters*. Macmillan.
 Brooks, Phillips, *Letters of Travel*. Dutton.
 Browning, Robert and Elizabeth B., *Letters* (2 vols.). Harper.
 Byron, Lord, *Correspondence*. (2 vols.). Murray.
 Carlyle, Jane Welsh, *Letters and Memorials*. Scribner.
 Carlyle, Thomas, and Emerson, R. W., *Correspondence* (2 vols.). Houghton.
 Chesterfield, Lord. *Letters, Sentences and Maxims*. Burt's Home L.
 Cowper, William, *Selected Letters*. Oxford Press.
 Dickens, Charles, *Letters* (3 vols.). Chapman (London).
 Duff-Gordon, Lady, *Letters from Egypt*. McClure.
 Fitzgerald, Edward, *Letters*. Richards (London).
 Franklin, Benj., *Familiar Letters*. R. L. S.
 Garrick, David, *Private Correspondence* (2 vols.). Colburn (London).
 Gray, Thomas, *Poems and Letters*. Ev.
 Irving, Washington, *Letters in Pierre M. Irving's Life and Letters of Washington Irving* (4 vols.). Putnam.
 James, Henry, *Letters*. Scribner.

- Lamb, Charles, *Letters* (2 vols.). Ev.
 Lowell, James Russell, *Letters*. Harper.
 Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley, *Letters*. Ev.
 Page, Walter Hines, Letters in B. J. Hendrick's *Life and Letters of Walter Hines Page*. Doubleday.
 Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, *Family Letters*. Scribner.
 Ruskin, John, *Letters to a College Friend*. Macmillan.
 Shelley, Percy Bysshe, *Letters* (2 vols.). Scribner.
 Stevenson, R. L., *Letters*. Scribner.
 Ticknor, George, Letters in George S. Hillard's *Life, Letters, and Journal of George Ticknor*.
 Walpole, Horace, *Earlier Letters*. Sel. Eng. Cl., Oxford Press.
 Winthrop, John, *Love Letters of a Puritan*. Dodd, Mead.

VIII. ORATORY AND LITERATURE

Oratory owes its right to be considered as literature to its power to please not only hearers but readers. In its highest forms, it holds masterful sway over the emotions, as well as over the intellect and the will; therefore it cannot be omitted from a survey of literary types. The fact that it is primarily designed for oral rather than written delivery does not affect its standing as literature: drama is also designed for the ear as well as the eye; and, indeed, the same is true of all poetry and much of our prose.

An incidental indication of the relationship between oratory and pure literature is found in the speeches included in drama, fiction, epic poetry and the Bible. Antony's oration over Cæsar, Lucifer's address to the fallen angels, St. Paul's sermon on Mars Hill, may be cited at random. Oratory holds an important position in Homer and Shakespeare; it is indeed an established convention of both the epic and the historical drama.

Not only must oratory, moreover, be included in literature, but it must sometimes be given a very high place. I have placed it last among the prose forms considered in this volume not because it is least important, but in order that it may stand next to poetry, which it often resembles. In its finest examples oratory has an ethical greatness and a historical importance which, added

to the more distinctly literary qualities displayed, lift it to a high plane. These ethical and historical connections may detain us for a moment before we pass to stylistic considerations.

"The perfect orator is the perfect man," said Cicero; and Quintillian, who was the great Roman teacher of oratory, insists in his *Institutes* upon the teaching of ethics as a basis for the art of public speaking. The really great orators have been always the advocates of high standards of action. They have had the impetus of great ethical purpose behind them. Truth, justice, liberty, honor have been their watchwords from Demosthenes to Roosevelt. "I would rather be right than be president," declared Henry Clay, and his words are typical of the great orator's attitude. Oratory has from the earliest times, moreover, devoted itself largely to forwarding boldly and in the midst of dangers, the cause of political liberty, and to advocating the great reforms of its times. Demosthenes fighting for Greek liberty, Cicero opposing imperialistic designs in the Roman Senate, Burke attacking oppression in the English House of Commons, Mirabeau thundering against autocracy in the French assembly, Patrick Henry shouting defiance of George the Third in the Virginia convention, O'Connell pleading for Irish freedom on the Hill of Tara—these are some of the outstanding scenes in the world's battle for democracy.

An importance chiefly historical is given to many of the great orations by their connection with political events of the first importance.

Oratory and politics go together, and there is scarcely a great political movement in history that has not had its orators: so that when we read Demosthenes, Cicero, Savonarola, Hugh Latimer, Burke, Mirabeau, Webster, or Lincoln, we find our interests divided between political history and literature. The history of the world, indeed, is written in oratory. So strongly did both Herodotus and Thucydides feel the importance of oratory to history that they interpolated many speeches of heroes in their narratives, writing them out from imagination when they had no accurate reports. "I have made persons say what it seemed most opportune for them to say in view of each situation," wrote Thucydides. And if oratory is necessary for the interpretation of history, so is the reading of history a help to the understanding of the great orations.

These ethical and historical qualities of oratory are less distinctly literary than certain qualities of style and treatment that may be noticed. The first of these is logic, both in assembly of material and in reasoning. This requirement, insisted upon at such length by Aristotle in his treatise on the subject, is of course very important in any speech that is aimed to convince; and it is of the utmost necessity in a long discourse, like many of those made before legislative assemblies, conventions, and courts. Many a schoolboy has been forced to analyze the structure of Burke on "Conciliation," and it is worth doing if only to discover how logically a great public speaker arranges his material.

In the second place, directness and simplicity of expression are requirements of oratory. The vague, the obscure, and the verbose are inimical to good public speaking. Many of the great speeches of the world are heavily laden with thought; and if an audience is to follow understandingly, it must have the matter stated as plainly as language will allow. Speeches overladen with ornament, in what classical writers called the "Asian" style, like the youthful speeches of Webster, and many Fourth of July addresses; orations roaring with false rhetoric and quivering with theatrical fury: these are the failures of oratory. Their eloquence becomes grandiloquence; the sublime degenerates into the hifalutin. Aristotle said the final word in the matter, when he declared that the style must be "neither too low or too grand, but suitable to the subject."

The degree of elevation in the style is governed very much by the emotion inspired by "the subject," and that emotion, when brought to a high pitch, makes itself heard and felt most in rhythmical movement and figurative language. Emotion inevitably translates itself into rhythm—into the movements of the dance, of song, of verse, of rhythmic prose. Read any emotional prose, and see how inescapable rhythm is: the crucial scene of a novel, the climacteric passages of plays, the perorations of great speeches.

"Fondly do we hope—
Fervently do we pray,
That this mighty scourge of war
May speedily pass away."

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runs the peroration (accidentally rhymed in the first quatrain) of Lincoln's second inaugural.

"Yet,
If God wills that it shall continue
Until all the wealth piled up by the bondman's two
 hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be
 sunk,
And until every drop of blood drawn with the lash
 shall be paid for with another drawn by the sword,
As it was said three thousand years ago,
So still it must be said,
The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous al-
 together.

"With malice toward none,
With charity for all,
With firmness in the right as God gives us to see the
 right,
Let us strive on to finish the work we are in:
To bind up the nation's wounds;
To care for him who shall have borne the battle,
And for his widow,
And his orphan—
To do all which may achieve and cherish a just and
 lasting peace
Among ourselves,
And with all nations."

Printed in broken lines, this, or the Gettysburg address, or the peroration to Webster's second reply to Hayne, or the close of Pitt's "Speech on a Motion for an Address to the Throne," or certain passages from the Catilinian orations or the Philippics might well pass for verse. Especially is this true when we note that they have in common

with poetry not only rhythm, but figurative language also. This is an almost inseparable characteristic of the more impassioned passages. Too many figures make for a florid style, but a single metaphor may add surprising force. Demosthenes used figures less often than his contemporary Isocrates, for example, and far less than exponents of the Asiatic style, but how effective his imagery is! "As long as the ship is *safe*," he says, "whether it be great or small, the mariner, the pilot, every sailor should exert himself to prevent its wreck, but when the sea has rolled over it, their efforts are vain. Now we, O Athenians, are safe. . . . What must we do?" And thus Demosthenes introduces his plan to prevent the wreck of the city which he sees impending.

One other quality of oratory I must mention: it is wit. Cleverness, brilliance, irony, and quickness in repartee add incalculably to a speaker's resources. Cicero possessed them in ample measure; most of the great French orators have had them; and among English orators those brilliant contemporaries Charles James Fox and Richard Brinsley Sheridan were notable for them. Sheridan was a famous playwright, some of whose comedies still hold the stage: when the younger Pitt once suggested that he would better keep to his plays instead of intruding upon politics, Sheridan replied that if he should, he would proceed to cast Pitt in the character of the "Angry Boy" in Jonson's *Alchemist*; and it is said that the title of the "Angry Boy" long clung to the younger orator. Daniel O'Connell had a sharp tongue, true Irish wit, and

a gift for invective. He once said that Sir Robert Peel's smile was "like the silver plate on a coffin."

It would be easy to extend a list of literary or stylistic qualities to be found in orations to a considerable length, but these five that I have suggested are certainly among the chief: logical arrangement and reasoning, simplicity and directness, rhythm, imagery, and wit.

But one other consideration must not be overlooked. Though it is of the very essence of the style, I have chosen to consider it separately. I refer to the personality of the orator. Cato the Censor defined the orator as "a good man skilled in speaking." The man behind the words is always important, as I have pointed out in my previous chapters; but in the case of the oration, the words fall from the lips of a man physically present, who adds to their force by gesture, expression, the tones of his voice, and the power of his personality. Cicero repeatedly insists on the necessity of versatile attainment for the orator: certainly the man who by his varied qualities of body, mind and spirit commands the respect of his audience will fare better than an insignificant fellow. Webster had a magnificent presence: his popular nickname was "The Godlike." "His craggy face, precipice of a brow, and eyes glowing like coals," his melodious voice, his dignity, showed that nature had cast him for the part of orator. Henry Clay had a great platform presence; so had Gladstone, Bright, Chatham, Beecher, O'Connell. O'Connell's voice was a wonderful organ; it is estimated that a hundred and fifty thousand persons heard

and understood him in his great speech at the Hill of Tara. Henry Ward Beecher was a born orator; his personality was of the versatile kind that Cicero demanded, and few speaking voices have been more charming or expressive. It was said of him that he could make an audience laugh or cry at will merely by pronouncing the word "Mesopotamia." It is true that Demosthenes' natural gifts were very modest; Burke's voice was shrill and unpleasant; Jonathan Edwards wrought extraordinary effects from his pulpit without a gesture, and without raising his voice or altering his ascetic demeanor; Calhoun's voice was not pleasant, nor was that of his fellow Southerner John Randolph of Roanoke. But with these exceptions (and doubtless some few others) great, rich voices, and impressive personalities, frequently emphasized by large physical proportions, have been part of the endowment of orators.

It is true, moreover, that the fame of certain orators rests largely on the tradition of their greatness rather than upon orations that we read to-day. Does anyone read Brougham or Everett or Sumner to-day? One may be allowed to have his doubts; and even, after a taste, to abstain oneself. Besides, there are certain great orators of whom we have few or no authentic speeches. An example is Patrick Henry. There were no shorthand reporters to take down the words of Patrick Henry in the second Virginia convention, and the "Give me liberty or give me death" oration is the product of the pen of William Wirt, Henry's biographer. Wirt did for Henry what Thucydides

did for Pericles: he perpetuated an oratorical reputation. Yet we have the testimony of Henry's contemporaries that he was a great orator. Another example is that of Sheridan, whose speech on the begums in the trial of Warren Hastings was not preserved. But we have the word of Sheridan's enemy Pitt that "it surpassed all the eloquence of ancient or modern times," and that of Burke that it was "the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument, and wit united of which there is any record or tradition." One other illustration may be produced in Savonarola. The record of his oratory that we have makes us marvel at the story of its effectiveness. The fact seems to be that the inadequacy of the record is directly due to the very effectiveness of the orator's words, for the recorder finishes his work in one place with these words: "At this point I was overcome and could not go on."

Shall we ever again have orators so powerful in the mastery of men's hearts and minds? Is the age of oratory past? Let us look at its declension, surveying it in the various classes into which Aristotle (and after him the Roman commentators) divided orations: deliberative, judicial, and demonstrative.

Deliberative oratory comprises speeches intended to move an audience to action, and includes those delivered in legislatures, conventions, and mass-meetings. Most great orations have been of this type. But nowadays the real work of legislative assemblies is done in committee meetings, and the oratory is largely for show—for the people

at home to read. There are some exceptions, and I suppose there will always be. And besides, not every age can produce a group like Pitt, Fox, Sheridan and Burke in the English parliament in the latter half of the eighteenth century, or Webster, Calhoun, Hayne, and Clay in the American senate in the 1840's, or the orators of the French Revolution. Lloyd-George in England and Mussolini in Italy may be cited among effective orators of recent times; yet the dearth of oratory in connection with the cataclysmic events of the second decade of the twentieth century is apparently indicative of the passing of deliberative oratory.

Certainly the day of judicial oratory (which is the oratory of the courts) is past. The great reason for the cultivation of oratorical art among the Greeks was the necessity a private citizen might at any time be under of defending himself before a very large and not too intelligent jury—such a body as the five hundred men, chiefly sailors, who convicted Socrates, for example. But now court procedure is not only in the hands of a professional class, but it has become a science rather than an art, with little opportunity for oratory in any literary sense.

Demonstrative oratory, the third class, is distinctly literary and aims chiefly to please. It includes orations on occasions, such as Webster's Bunker Hill addresses; and memorial eulogies like Beecher's "Abraham Lincoln"; as well as a class of seemingly unavoidable but ridiculous after-dinner speeches. Demonstrative oratory is still with us, and the only apparent reason for a falling off in it

would seem to be a decline in the other departments of oratory, and perhaps a shift of interest to the newspaper.

In pulpit oratory, which is really a fourth class, I doubt very much whether an apparent decrease in church loyalty has brought about poorer sermons, upon the whole. There have always been poor and dull sermons in abundance and I suppose always will be, but not a little of the preaching of to-day is of comparative excellence.

It may be suggested that the radio may bring about some revival of interest in this half-literary, half-forensic art. When millions of people listen to a president's inaugural, the increased importance of the public address is at least suggested. The gesture, the kindling of the eye, are lost, but the voice, at least, remains; and by so much the radio has an advantage over cold print. The thought of a revival of oratory from such a cause is at least an interesting one.

A final word of advice. Readers of oratory must bend every effort to reproduce the effectiveness of the original utterance. Historical aids are necessary where your information is lacking, and biographical material about the orator is very helpful. Readers of oratory, too, should be hearers of it: never miss an opportunity to hear a great speaker.

BOOK LIST VIII

Part I contains names of volumes by individual authors, Part II, anthologies.

Part I

- Bright, John, *Speeches*. Ev.
 Burke, Edmund, *American Speeches and Letters*. Ev.
 Cicero, *Select Orations* (tr. C. C. Yonge). McKay, Phila.
 Demosthenes, *Select Orations*. Ev.
 Fox, Chas. Jas, *Speeches*. Ev.
 Lincoln, A., *Speeches and Letters*. Ev.
 Macaulay, T. B., *Speeches on Politics and Literature*. Ev.
 Pitt, Wm., *Orations on the War with France*. Ev.
 Webster, Daniel, *Selected Speeches*. Burt's Home L.
 Wilson, Woodrow, *Addresses*. Holt.

Part II

- Brewer, D. J., *World's Best Orations* (10 vols.). Kaiser.
 Bryan, W. J., *World's Famous Orations*. (10 vols.).
 Funk & Wagnalls.
 Depew, Chauncey M., *Library of Oratory* (15 vols.).
 DuMont.
 Johnston, Alex., *American Orations* (4 vols.). Putnam.
 Miller, M. M., *Great Debates in American History*.
 (14 vols.). Current Literature.
 Rhys, E., *British Historical Speeches and Orations*. Ev.
 Ringwalt, Ralph C., *Modern American Oratory*. Holt.

IX. EVERYMAN'S POETRY

Everyone likes poetry.

In every man, woman, and child there is some spark of poetic insight,—somewhat of the poet,—hidden however effectually it may be from others, and even, sometimes, from himself. Not all the so-called “practical” things of this our life, nor the scrambling after fortune, nor the confusion of the times, have quite extinguished from the soul of any single man that ultimate spark of insight which establishes his kinship with the poet and the seer. The spark that thus survives all the attempts of the world to put it out is man’s yearning toward a higher meaning in the universe—a feeling for the divine—a reaching upward to some high solution for the problem of this terrible welter of circumstance in which he is involved. Every man yearns for such a solution, whether he acknowledges the yearning to himself or not; and in the poet he finds a guide. Let us call it God-hunger—this quality we all have which connects us with the poet. It is identical with religious feeling; and just as all men are fundamentally religious, so are they poetical. In religion, men try to connect physical things—altars, candles, crosses—with higher truths; just so the poet relates the things of earth with ultimate, high meanings through his symbols and fancies. Whatever his attitude toward theological dogma may be,

every man is essentially religious; and whatever his relation to the world of trade and matter, every man is somewhat a poet.

When anyone says to me that he doesn't like poetry, I usually reply, "Perhaps you can learn to like it; the experiment is surely worth trying," or something after that conciliatory and wheedling fashion. What I want to do is to contradict him flatly. I want to say, "You do like poetry. You've been frightened off by something. For some cause you have taken an unreasonable attitude against phenomena with which, by your very nature, you are in harmony. You do like poetry, and I know you do, whatever you may say against it."

My grandfather once had an old farm mare he called Nell. Five days she worked in the field, the sixth we drove her to town, and the seventh to meeting. She was a model horse (albeit a little slow and lumbering of gait) in all but one respect: she had an unreasoning terror of threshing machines. We were always afraid to take her out on the road in threshing season for fear we might meet a threshing machine changing its location. Bicycles, automobiles, even railroad trains moved her not, but she would lose her head and everything else, including the buggy and most of the harness, whenever she even sniffed the odor of a threshing machine. We said she was "thrasher-shy."

Some readers are "poetry-shy." They read fiction and history and biography and even essays, but let one bring them within sniffing dis-

tance of anything that looks like poetry, and there's no holding them between the shafts.

We always supposed old Nell had experienced some misfortune in connection with a threshing machine, in the days of her colthood. A horse properly "road-broke" will not shy at machinery of any kind. There was some defect of early training or experience. May I carry my analogy a step further and suggest that a poetry-shy man must owe his peculiarity to some defect of early training?

Children are naturally poetry-lovers. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy." It is upon the children that "those truths do rest which we are striving all our lives to find." Did you never hear a child repeat about bedtime of a windy night:

"Whenever the sun and stars are set,
Whenever the moon is high,
All night long in the dark and wet
A man goes riding by.
Late in the night when the fires are out
Why does he gallop and gallop about?"

Or that other rainy-day piece of Stevenson's that ends:

"The organ with the organ man
Is singing in the rain."

You know then that the child feels the poetry. Something in the child is reaching out to the same thing the poet was reaching for. No; it is not the rhythm merely that charms him. He can no more separate form and subject-matter than you

can—than the poet can. His sympathetic imagination is perhaps stronger than yours. He lives the poem. He has the secret.

But I fear that boys are often weaned away from the Muse about the time they begin to get enthusiastic about baseball. Nothing could be more regrettable. Such a misfortune will be unlikely to occur to the boy who has a parent or teacher who will read poetry aloud to him.

Poetry is so personal a matter that I am sure you will forgive me if I speak here of my own experience. The great poetical treats of my childhood were on certain Sunday evenings when my father got out that old one-volume edition of Shakespeare and read Woolsey's soliloquy from *Henry VIII*, or Richard III's soliloquy in his tent. The thrill of haunting strangeness in these lines is a memory of my boyhood:

"The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight.
Cold, fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh."

Richard III was a very wicked man, but I always liked him without quite knowing why: I suppose it was because I liked the poetry of his speeches. I know I liked the poetry largely because of my father's voice, which, on that sentence, "The lights burn blue," always sank to a sepulchral hollowness that was in itself thrilling.

I speak at length of the use of the voice in reading poetry, and I shall return to it, because it is of the first importance not only to a child's appreciation of poetry but to everyone's; and if you have strayed away from the true path of poesy since

those early days, there is no better method of finding your way back than to read aloud.

For alas, there are many who have forgotten their high calling and forsworn their inheritance. Worldly and material distractions have drawn their attention away from that other world of poetry. Is there a return possible for them? What may they do to be saved?

Very emphatically let me say that it is possible for anyone to cultivate an appreciation of poetry. The trouble is that many people, having lost their way in childhood or youth, and never having chanced to find the right path into the realms of poesy, think it now too difficult of access. It is as though the pilgrim in literature stood in a luxuriant valley where grasses grow rankly, trees spread their inviting shade, and fruit falls into his hands unasked, and, having lifted up his eyes, saw in the distance

“the silver-misty morn
Rolling her smoke about the royal mount . . .
At times the summit of the high city flashed;
At times the spires and turrets half-way down
Pricked through the mist; at times the great gate shone
Only, that opened on the field below;
Anon, the whole fair city disappeared.”

There will be some like Gareth's counselors to assure him,

“Lord, there is no such city anywhere,
But all a vision.”

But there may come a time when, having heard much of its beauties from those who have visited

it, he may wish to see it more closely. Then his success will depend partly upon the path he chooses, partly upon his native strength, but more than all upon his persistence. But when he has once conquered the heights, when he walks upon the battlements knowing he belongs there, when he breathes that rarest air under heaven with delight—what experience is to be compared with his?

You may think my little allegory only a high-flown figure of speech, but I counsel anyone who finds discouragement in the subtleties of Shelley and Browning to keep the allegory in mind. I am sure there is more joy in the more subtle and difficult passages of the greater poets—*after you have once mastered them*—than in any on the more level, easy stretches.

Now for a few bits of practical advice. If I were conducting a newspaper column which purported to give sound advice to earnest seekers, and should receive a question like this, "What can a young man without training in poetical appreciation do to cultivate such appreciation?" I should thus make reply:

Begin with something of the narrative type in contemporary poetry. I should suggest Neihardt's "Song of Hugh Glass" or Masfield's "Dauber." Any of Neihardt's poems, or any of Masfield's, will do very well. Read them for the story. If you like a good story you will like any one of them. Forget they are poetry; remember only they are virile and strong and true.

Or try some of Byron—"Mazeppa" and "The Prisoner of Chillon." Re-read the sonnet at the

beginning of "Chillon" after you have finished the poem, and then go back to it two or three days in succession. Let it soak in. You may like Scott's poems. Try "Marmion." Here you are likely to come to grips with the annotator, who is always thrusting his notes in our faces; but go your ways; let him keep to the back of the volume where he belongs, and call on him only if you sorely need him. Scott himself supplied a few pages of notes to the poem. They will be interesting to read when you have finished the story. Skip the introductions to the cantos, too, if you wish. But keep your characters distinctly in mind and do not fail to visualize both action and scene, and you will get along beautifully. It is a fine story, historical in setting, with a villain for hero. Now take up the *Idylls of the King*. Skip all introductory editorial matter; it is the poetry you want. Read "The Coming of Arthur," "Gareth and Lynette," "The Holy Grail," "Guinevere," "Lancelot and Elaine," and "The Passing of Arthur." Do not worry about the symbolism; make your own theories if you want to, and I think you will.

You have now passed the first grade. You have found the easiest path to the high city of Camelot; you have increased your strength to climb. We shall now measure your persistence; perhaps what you can now see more clearly of the "spires and turrets half-way down" will help you on. At any rate, the time has now come for you to plunge boldly ahead. You will find some things you know you should like and don't; don't let that worry you, but when you find something

you do like cling to it for dear life. Read it over and over; memorize it. When you read Milton, begin with the first book of "Paradise Lost," not with the shorter poems. With Wordsworth, on the contrary, read shorter poems in some good selected edition. With Wordsworth and Browning you may need help; read some good critical literature. The introductions to the volumes of selections from these authors in the Riverside series are good; but your salvation will depend mainly on your own intellectual energy and persistence. Remember, such as these are the steep ascents which it is worth most to conquer.

I must not speak at greater length of paths, but proceed to methods of climbing.

Poetry should always be read aloud, at least until one has become a very experienced poetry-reader. Even then it should be frequently read aloud. Did you know that the ancients never read silently? The old custom of always reading aloud still survives in the Orient, and I think it is a good one. Words are something more than eye-symbols; they represent sounds, and poetry even more than prose depends upon the rhythm, harmony and rhyme of the spoken words. The earliest poets did not write their poems; they sang or chanted them. The old ballads were composed by a whole group singing and chanting together, and all taking part. Probably no musician would ever be satisfied merely to peruse the score of "Parsifal." It would seem absurd even to say that instruments and sound were needed to interpret it. It should no more need to be said that

Paradise Lost must be well read by a human voice in order to elucidate it. The silent reader wantonly throws away a large part of the poem. It may be necessary to read without an auditor, but the auditor, I have always found, is a help too; for one doubles his pleasure when he shares it.

The value of memorizing poetry also must be mentioned. Besides the benefit of having one's mind well stored with beautiful words and images, and the help in appreciating formal elements that one finds in memory work, one can adopt no better means for getting a true understanding of the thought of a piece than the memorizing of it. Many times have I discovered subtle meanings, hints and phases of thought while committing a poem to memory that had quite eluded me in the mere reading of it.

Perhaps the greatest trouble that would-be poetry-lovers find, however, is a lack of poetical apprehension. The trouble is that their minds are not accustomed to the philosophical habit of poetry, which is very fond of applying a higher, generalized truth to the concrete facts of life.

“The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to
heaven
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.”

One may not be of a metaphysical turn; one may not have any understanding at all of the “forms

of things unknown," so that when the poet's pen gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name, it is still airy nothing to him.

I have but two things to suggest for such a state of mind. One is a little more thought upon the really important things of life and death, the here and the hereafter,—perhaps a little more church-going. It seems incredible that any one should go through life without any particular attention to the greater issues of existence, but very many of us do. Thoughtful worship is one of the best methods of training for poetical appreciation. The other help is found in the love of nature. The term "love of nature" may be a bit high-sounding, but it is an everyday thing. It comes from a habit of noticing the plants and trees and birds and sky and landscape in all changes of season and weather. As you go to work in the morning you can see trees as beautiful as any Corot ever put upon canvas; you can hear birds singing as sweetly as ever sang that skylark, "in profuse strains of unpremeditated art" to Shelley's ear. Landscapes as fine as any that Thomson or Cowper or Wordsworth ever saw are to be had for the noticing. These things are ours; we cannot truly live without appreciating them; but we are often blinder to them than the sightless. With what wealth the lover of nature is storing his mind! Wordsworth looked on the daffodils:

"I gazed, and gazed, but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought;
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,

They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills
And dances with the daffodils."

It is with such visions that our minds must all be stored.

And now, and lastly, the earnest but fearful pilgrim must be reminded again that persistence is a great virtue. He cannot go wrong in re-reading, aloud, such a poem as the "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality" daily for weeks at a time. That were an education in itself. The study of poetry is worth the time it takes. It employs our highest faculties; it lifts us to the highest planes of life. For the poet is on Sinai with God; let us not break the tablets. There is no higher exercise for the mind than that of making ourselves one with the great minds; and is not such a purpose worthy the highest exertion, worthy hardship and privation, worthy days and nights of devotion?

It was with the hyperbole of intense conviction that Mrs. Browning called the poets:

"The only truth-tellers now left to God,
The only speakers of essential truth,
Opposed to relative, comparative,
And temporal truth; the only holders by
His sun-skirts, through conventional gray glooms;
The only teachers who instruct mankind,
From just a shadow on a charnel wall
To find man's veritable stature out,
Erect, sublime—the measure of a man."

BOOK LIST IX

Part I lists some introductions to poetry and works on versification. In Part II are cited some general anthologies of poetry.

Part I

- Alden, R. M., *English Verse*. Holt.
Beeching, H. C., *The Study of Poetry*. Camb. Press.
Bright, J. W., and Miller, R. B., *Elements of English Versification*. Ginn.
Carman, Bliss, *The Poetry of Life*. Page.
Colson, Ethel M., *How to Read Poetry*. McClurg.
Cook, A. S., ed., *The Art of Poetry*. Ginn.
Corson, Hiram, *Primer of English Verse*. Ginn.
Fairchild, A. H. R., *The Making of Poetry*. Putnam.
Gummere, F. B., *Handbook of Poetics*. Ginn.
Hubbell and Beaty, *An Introduction to Poetry*. Macmillan.
Mabie, H. W., *Introductions to Notable Poems*. Dodd.
Matthews, B., *A Study of Versification*. Houghton.
Neihardt, John G., *Poetic Values*. Macmillan.
Neilson, W. A., *English Verse*. Holt.
Scudder, Vida D., *The Life of the Spirit in Modern English Poetry*. Houghton.
Shairp, J. C., *Aspects of Poetry*. Houghton.
Strachan, R. H., *The Soul of Modern Poetry*. Hodder.
Untermeyer, L., *The New Era in American Poetry*. Holt.
Watts-Dunton, T., *Poetry and the Renaissance of Wonder*. Dutton.
Wilkinson, Marguerite, *New Voices*. Macmillan.

Part II

- Bates, C. F., *Cambridge Book of Poetry*. Crowell.
Boynton, P. H., *American Poetry*. Scribner.

- Braithwaite, W. S., *Book of Georgian Verse*. Brentano;
Book of Modern British Verse. Brentano.
Anthology of Magazine Verse, 1913, etc. Comme &
Marshall.
- Bridges, Robt., *The Chilswell Book of English Poetry*.
Longmans.
- Bronson, W. C., *English Poems* (4 vols.), U. of Chicago
Press.
- Lounsbury, T. R., *Yale Book of American Verse*. Yale
Press.
- Manly, J. M., *English Poetry*. Ginn.
- Monroe, Hariett, and Henderson, Alice C., *The New
Poetry*. Macmillan.
- Page, C. H., *Chief American Poets*. Houghton.
- Pancoast, H. S., *Standard English Poems*. Holt.
- Quiller-Couch, A., *The Oxford Books of Verse* (single
vols. for English, Victorian, Canadian, Australasian,
French, Italian, Latin). Oxford Press.
- Stedman, E. C., *An American Anthology*. Houghton.
- Stevenson, Burton E., *The Home Book of Verse*. Holt.
- Untermeyer, L., *Modern American Poetry; Modern
British Poetry*. Harcourt.
- Ward, Humphrey, *The English Poets* (5 vols.). Mac-
millan.

X. THE GREAT EPIC

Let us imagine the great hall of an ancient castle, smoky and half-lighted by torches, with warriors feasting and drinking,—men of courage and brawn, boasting and quarreling, waited upon by thralls,—when into the rough and brawling place comes a minstrel with his harp. He is greeted with shouts of welcome, and all dispose themselves to listen to his song. This scop or gleeman—the primitive poet—sweeps his fingers across the string of his instrument as a command for silence: “*Hwaet!*” shouts the singer of Beowulf at the beginning of his song—“What ho!”—and in later songs it is the imperative “Listeneth!”—and in an old French song:

“Barons, listen, and cease your quarrels,
And I will sing you a beautiful song.”

And having obtained silence, the minstrel chants his lay.

What were these ancient minstrel songs like? They were fashioned of such materials as would appeal to the minstrel’s audience; they were songs of courageous deeds, of high adventure, of kings and heroes. In short, they were made of what is known as epic material.

This epic material was permeated and suffused with the mood of courage. That fundamental quality was present because it was a virtue most admired by the men for whom the songs were made.

Their own stout hearts were stirred by the stories of other men's heroism. In the second place, epic material tended to center about certain great men—tribal heroes, leaders in war and the hunt. "There is no heroic poem in the world but is at bottom a biography—a life of a man," wrote Carlyle. Achilles, Odysseus, Jason, Æneas, Beowulf, Sigurd, Roland—the list is long but most illustrious; and it is the heroic qualities—the spirit, the endurance, the resourcefulness—of these men that make the epic stories such attractive reading. Thirdly, these tales are filled with manifestations of supernatural power: the friendship or enmity of the gods in Homer and Vergil and northern myth, the monsters of Beowulf, the creatures of the other world in Celtic story. And lastly, all these things are a representation of the life, ideas and ideals of the primitive society from which they spring, and have at least some flavor of historical or legendary actuality. In other words, they have racial significance.

In the course of time this more or less fragmentary epic material was welded together in great epic poems. The method by which the great epics grew out of the original hero-tales is a question for scholars, and one upon which they are not agreed or likely soon to be. In some cases we can discern (or think we can) the traces of welding, the handiwork of the redactor. But at any rate we have the epics, and we know they reflect great racial movements and moods.

The epics of Homer are the fountainhead of this type of poetry. "Homer begins the whole

business of epic," says Lascelles Abercrombie, "imperishably fixes its type and, in a way that can never be questioned, declares its artistic purpose." Of the two Homeric poems, the *Iliad* is the more active, vivid, and emotional; the *Odyssey* the more delightful story of wonder. The *Iliad* is a story of heroes in war; the *Odyssey* the tale of a hero abroad and at home. Both reveal human nature and attract us by their eternal freshness of comment on life. Achilles is a great battle hero; so is Odysseus, but we follow him in the *Odyssey* as a great traveler and the head of a house—the wise and clever Odysseus "of many devices." Both poems are filled with episodes the most thrilling, and both can be read to-day with interest whether one has historical or literary background for them or not.

Read, for example, the description of that great storm that Odysseus encountered after he had left Calypso's island. Poseidon, wroth with the hero,

"gathered the clouds and troubled the waters of the deep, grasping his trident in his hands; and he roused all storms of all manner of winds, and shrouded in clouds the land and sea: and down sped night from heaven. The East Wind and the South Wind clashed, and the stormy West, and the North, that is born in the bright air, rolling onward a great wave. Then were the knees of Odysseus loosened and his heart melted, and heavily he spake to his own great spirit: 'Oh, wretched man that I am! what is to befall me at the last? . . .'

"Even as he spake, the great wave smote down upon him, driving on in terrible wise, that the raft reeled

again. And far therefrom he fell, and lost the helm from his hand; and the fierce blast of the jostling winds came and brake his mast in the midst, and sail and yard-arm fell afar into the deep. Long time the water kept him under, nor could he speedily rise from beneath the rush of the mighty wave: for the garments hung heavy which fair Calypso gave him. But late and at length he came up, and spat forth from his mouth the bitter salt water, which ran down in streams from his head. Yet even so forgot he not his raft, for all his wretched plight, but made a spring after it in the waves, and clutched it to him, and sat in the midst thereof, avoiding the issues of death; and the great wave swept it hither and thither along the stream. And as the North Wind in the harvest tide sweeps the thistle-down along the plain, and close the tufts cling each to other, even so the winds bare the raft hither and thither along the main. Now the South would toss it to the North to carry, and now again the East would yield it to the West to chase.

“But the daughter of Cadmus marked him, Ino of the fair ankles. . . .”

But the hero's troubles were not over with the coming of Ino, nor yet when next day he is discovered by Nausicaa, “like to the gods in form and comeliness,” nor even when he at last reaches rock-bound Ithaca, to be welcomed after twenty years by the old hound Argus, who alone knew the long-absent master. It is upon the wings of romance that Homer carries us through the wonders of the isles of far seas and into the midnight land of the Cimmerians; it is with the keen realistic observation of a man who knows and loves life that he sees the thousand details of houses, furni-

ture, customs, and crops. . . . But the book is open; every man, woman, and child may—and should—read it for himself.

Vergil's *Æneid* belongs to the more literary type of epic. Of Homer we know nothing trustworthy—some have liked to think of him as a blind, wandering harper—but Vergil was a man of letters who worked with full literary consciousness. He imitated Homer in many respects, as I suppose all epic poets must forever; yet I recall Voltaire's epigram that if Homer made Vergil, it was his greatest work. The *Æneid's* theme is nothing less than the founding of Rome; the epic is a very national one. It has suffered from being used for schoolboys' parsing, but even beginners in the use of the Latin language can scarcely fail to appreciate the fine interpolated story of the warrior-friends Nisus and Euryalus, or that of Jason and Medea. Vergil can but suffer in translation, for his style is one of the chief glories of the Latin tongue. The influence of Vergil upon the course of the world's literature has been very great. It has been "wider, more unbroken, and fraught with more personal affection than that of any other poet," asserts Oscar Kuhns in his *Love of Books and Reading*. Tennyson pays him high tribute:

"I salute thee, Mantovano,
I that loved thee since my days began:
Wielder of the mightiest measure
Ever moulded by the lips of man."

From the *Æneid* to *Beowulf* is a great leap in time—some seven centuries—but it is a greater

leap in manner, in language, and in the indications of the societies which brought these epics forth. For *Beowulf* is the product of a race far ruder than that fostered by the *pius* Æneas. Beowulf is a folk-hero the traditions of whom the English welcomed from Scandinavian beginnings. Some unknown and far lesser Old-English Homer finally put the legends about Beowulf's prodigies of strength and courage into a rude heroic poem which is the chief monument of the language known as Anglo-Saxon, or Old English. Curious as the contest of this tribal hero with dragons may be, they have little more than the fairy-story interest of the race's childhood. The chief value of the poem, aside from its philology, is in its portrayal of the life of the people which it details, the loyalty of his earls to the ring-giving king, the mead-drinking by the "hearth-companions" in the high hall of Heorot, the minstrel's tale, the swimming match, and the picture of the good king risking his life, and losing it at last, for his people. The following description of the haunt of the monster Grendel will give an idea of the style, for Professor Gummere, the translator, has preserved in it the alliteration and the brawling effect of the original verse. This is the best description of natural scenery in the poem:

"Untrod is their home:

By wolf-cliffs haunt they, and windy headlands,—
Fenways fearful, where flows the stream
From mountains gliding to gloom of the rocks,—
Underground flood. Not far is it hence
In measure of miles that the mere expands;

And o'er it the frost-bound forest hanging,
Sturdily rooted, shadows the wave.
By night is a wonder weird to see,
Fire on the waters. So wise lived none
Of the sons of men, to search those depths!
Nay, though the hearth-rover, harried by dogs,
The horn-proud hart, this holt should seek,
Long distance driven, his dear life first
On the brink he yields 'ere he brave the plunge
To hide his head: 'tis no happy place!
Thence the welter of waters washes up
Wan to welkin when winds bestir
Evil storms, and air grows dusk,
And the heavens weep."

The tribal mood, the air of nationality, noticeable in *Beowulf* is far more emphatic in the *Song of Roland*, the great French national epic. Moreover, the mood of transcendent courage is not greater in the *Iliad* itself than in the *Roland*. The hopeless battle against overwhelming odds, the friendship of Olivier, the prodigies of valor, and the sound of the horn calling for aid when the friends were sore beset—these things are unforgettable. Especially the horn—the suspense before it is blown, the quarrel of Roland and Olivier over the question of courage or cowardice in blowing it—and then its ringing blast over the rocky crags of the pass of Roncevalles. "The horn!" cries Charlemagne. "'Tis Roland's horn! To arms!" And again, as the faint, dying echoes still resound, "That horn has a long breath!" But Roland's temples were bursting as he blew it.

No more than mention may be made here of the very ancient Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*;

of the Finnish tribal lays in the *Kalevala*; of the romantic Spanish epic called the *Cid* after its hero; of the Italian literary epics of Tasso and Ariosto; or of the Portuguese *Lusiad*, which tells the story of the voyage of Vasco de Gama. But I should like to pause for a moment with that body of epic material that was included in the Norse *Poetic Edda*. In that collection of lays about the Norse gods and heroes is found the finest literature of the so-called Dark Ages, and they make singularly delightful reading to-day. In "The Waking of Angwantyr" the heroine Hervor (how rich in brave, beautiful, magnificent heroines this northern literature is!) seeks and secures her father's sword from his ghost, though she has to search for him amid bale-fires, and all strange terrors. "The Lay of Thrym" ("Thrymskvitha") is a rude and robust comedy of the gods of the North—Charlie Chaplin roistering in Valhalla. To recover his hammer, Thor, at the suggestion of that clown among gods, Loki, masquerades as the bride whom Thrym had sought from among the gods, and comes to the banquet Thrym prepares. But Thor cannot act in feminine character when he sits down to a feast, and he eats the whole of an ox, eight salmon, and all the dainties cooked for the ladies, and then drinks three casks of mead. Thrym is—justifiably, one may say—shocked at his bride's table-manners, and up speaks he. "Never," he says, "have I seen a bride take such big mouthfuls, or a maid drink so deep of mead." Of course such a story must end in a "free-for-all," in which Thor finds his hammer again. "Volo-Spa"

("Voluspo" in the Bellows translation) is very different. It has been called "the highest spiritual effort of the heathen poetry of the North." The prophecy of evil to the gods in it is magnificent (I use the Vigfùssen translation):

"The towering ash of Ygg-drasil quivers;
The aged tree groans;
The giants have broken loose.
Fiercely bays the hell-hound Garm before the cave of
the rock;
The chain shall snap and the wolf range free! . . .
The sun turns to darkness;
The earth sinks into the deep;
The bright stars vanish from out of the heavens;
Fume and flame rage together;
The lofty blaze plays against the very heaven.
Fiercely bays the hell-hound Garm before the cave of
the rock;
The chain shall snap and the wolf range free! . . .

It was certain of these old lays of the *Poetic Edda* that the author of the great German epic, the *Nibelungenlied*, utilized in his poem. Most of the mythology was dropped; the characters and episodes were softened somewhat; even new characters, as Rudiger, were added. Kriemhild, the *Nibelung* version of Gudrun, is lovelier and far less terrible than her Norse prototype. Gudrun fought beside her brothers in the great fight in "The Greenland Lay of Atli"; two enemy-warriors she "sent to hell" by her own hand; and she did other things more unpleasant to relate. "Seldom easy to deal with" is a phrase that recurs of this

daughter of Giuki, but the poet greatly approves her. "Happy is he," run the lines in the "Atli Ballad," "that shall beget such a daughter as Giuki begot." But Kriemhild is of a gentler kind, though when her husband is slain even she dedicates all, including her life, to vengeance.

Centuries later in time, and very different in mood—far more literary, more philosophical, more religious—is *Paradise Lost*, the great English literary epic of the fall of man. I wish to exhort my readers not to stop with the first two or three books of this poem, for it is in the later parts that some of its greatest beauties, both of thought and language, are found. There are few more beautiful passages in English poetry than the description of Eden in Book IV, few finer pieces of narrative than the story of the three-day battle in heaven in Book VI. For philosophical poetry, the temptation in Book IX is unsurpassed in English; and the review of history in the last two books is necessary to an understanding of the poem. *Paradise Lost* is one of the greatest works of literature; it is written in our own language; and it is a pity to dismiss it with a reading of the first two or three books.

Perhaps the one most important comment to be made upon *Paradise Lost* is that it possesses a more sustained sublimity of mood than any other work of literature. Milton begins by invoking the divine assistance

"That to the height of this great Argument
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men,"

and he never descends from the height of that "great argument." De Quincey, in making his famous distinction between the literature of knowledge and the literature of power, says, "What you owe to Milton is not any knowledge, of which a million separate items are still but a million advancing steps upon the same earthly level; what you owe is power, that is, exercise and expansion of your own latent capacity of sympathy with the infinite, where every pulse and each separate influx is a step upwards—a step ascending as upon a Jacob's ladder from earth to mysterious altitudes above the earth." That expresses very perfectly the possibilities of great poetry, and of *Paradise Lost* in particular.

A passage from the description of the Garden may stand here as an example of the blank verse of *Paradise Lost*:

"A happy rural seat of various view:
Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm,
Others whose fruit burnisht with golden rind
Hung amiable, *Hesperian* fables true,
If true, here only, and of delicious taste:
Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks
Grazing the tender herb, were interpos'd,
Or palmy hillock, or the flowery lap
Of some irriguous valley spread her store,
Flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose:
Another side, umbrageous grots and caves
Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling vine
Lays forth her purple grape, and gently creeps
Luxuriant; meanwhile murmuring waters fall
Down the slope hills, disperst, or in a lake,
That to the fringed bank with myrtle crownd,

Her crystal mirror holds, unite their streams.
The birds their quire apply; airs, vernal airs,
Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
The trembling leaves, while universal *Pan*
Knit with the *Graces* and the *Hours* in dance
Led on th' eternal spring.

There are two great works that I should like to mention here though they are more didactic than epic: Dante's *Divina Commedia* and Spenser's *Faery Queene*. The *Commedia* is a very great philosophical trilogy. Apparatus of notes and introduction is necessary to the reading of it, for it is closely correlated with its times, highly symbolical, and permeated with scholasticism. The *Inferno* comes first, telling of the poet's journey through hell, but the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, representing his visits to purgatory and heaven, are equal to the *Inferno* in power, sincerity and picturesqueness, and are not to be neglected by any serious student of literature. "The *Divine Comedy*," said Dean Church, "is one of those rare and solemn monuments of the mind's power which measure and test what it can reach to." That is a fine statement, and it fixes Dante as a challenge to thinking readers.

The *Divine Comedy* is the poetical masterpiece of Catholicism; *The Faery Queene* is as ardently Protestant. Again we meet involved symbolism; again picturesqueness; again great poetry. Spenser has always been the poet's poet; to care greatly for him is a test of poetical appreciation. As in the great Italian work, so in *The Faery Queene*, the ethical content is of the highest importance.

To "the Right Noble and Valorous Sir Walter Raleigh, Knight," Spenser wrote that "the general end therefore of all the book, is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline." Beauty of verse, romantic story, and high spiritual significance are qualities which make it, incomplete though it is, one of the greatest English poems.

When it comes to advice about the reading of epic poems, two questions are paramount: one relates to the problem of translations, and the other to the use of historical and interpretative writings as an aid to understanding. It is an unhappy situation that we find ourselves in when we must lean upon the crutch of translation in reading great poetry, but we may as well make the best of it. Bryant's translation of the *Iliad* and Cowper's *Odyssey* are good ones; while Butcher and Lang's *Odyssey*, and Lang, Leaf, and Myers' *Iliad*, though in prose, represent the original better than most poetical translations. There is little to choose between several English *Æneids*. The translator cannot do justice to the great Latin poem, but he can render *Beowulf* very well, as F. B. Gummere did in alliterative verse and C. G. Child in prose, for example. A very pleasant and accessible translation of the *Song of Roland* is that of the Harvard Classics, though it is not as literal as the prose rendering of Isabel Butler. The Cary translation of Dante is still held the best, though Norton and Longfellow have translated him well. As to critical aids in reading these epics, I think their importance is often overestimated. It is possible,

I am sure, for the average reading person who has no special knowledge of the times with which Homer deals to enjoy him greatly. It cannot be doubted, on the other hand, that a thorough knowledge of early Greek life does increase one's appreciation of the Homeric poems, and a similar observation may be made in regard to other epics and their fields. Some competent introduction to each may, therefore, be recommended.

BOOK LIST X

Suggested editions of epics are in Part I, preceded by names of translators, and introductions are in Part II.

Part I

Armour, Margaret, *The Fall of the Nibelungs*. Ev.
 Bellows, Henry A., *The Poetic Edda*. (Scandinavian Cl., by American Scandinavian Foundation.) Oxford Press.

Bryant, W. C., *Iliad*. Houghton.

Butcher and Lang, *Odyssey*. Pocket Cl.

Butler, Isabel, *Song of Roland*. R. L. S.

Cary, Henry F., *Divine Comedy*. Ev.

Child, C. G., *Beowulf*. R. L. S.

Cowper, Wm., *Odyssey*. Ev.

Crawford, John. M., *Kalevala*. R. Clarke, Cincinnati.

Gummere, F. B., *Oldest English Epic*. Macmillan.

Lang, Leaf and Myers, *Iliad*. Pocket Cl.

Morris, Wm., *Volsung Saga*. Simmons.

Ross and Bacon, *The Gid*. U. of Calif. Press.

Rose, W. S., *Orlando Furioso*. Bell, London.

Taylor, E. F., *Æneid*. Ev.

Vigfùssen and Powell, *Corpus Porticum Boreale*. Clarendon Press.

- Way, Arthur S., *Song of Roland*. Cambridge Press.
Wiffen, J. H., *Jerusalem Delivered*. Bell, London.

Part II

- Browne, Henry, *A Handbook of Homeric Study*. Longmans.
Fletcher, J. S., *Dante*. Home Univ. L., Holt.
Jebb, Richard C., *Homer*. Maclehose & Says.
Ker, W. P., *Epic and Romance*. Macmillan.
Lang, Andrew, *Homer and the Epic*. Longmans.
Lawrence, W. W., *Medieval Story*. Columbia U. Press.
MacKail, J. W., *Virgil and His Meaning to the World of Today*. Jones (Boston).

XI. SHORT STORIES IN VERSE

“O lang, lang may their ladies sit
Wi’ their fans into their hand,
Or e’er they see Sir Patrick Spens
Come sailing to the land.

“O lang, lang may their ladies stand,
Wi’ their gold kems into their hair,
Waiting for their ain dear lords
For they’ll see them na mair.”

Strange almost past belief it is that the fate of Sir Patrick Spens should clutch at our hearts after these hundreds of years merely because some unlettered rustics once put together some uncouth lines about his death in “a deadly storm.” Many a captain has gone down with his ship before and since; nobody knows now who Sir Patrick was or whence he came; we know his very name, as we know his grave, only from the ballad:

“Half o’er, half o’er to Aberdour,
It’s fifty fadom deep,
And there lies guid Sir Patrick Spens,
Wi’ the Scots lords at his feet.”

The power of this old ballad, and all folk-ballads, to move our emotions comes chiefly from their nearness to the heart of the people. Their very lack of art is their great recommendation. Raciness is in itself a mighty power in literature; a

work indigenous to a whole folk is pretty sure to be a great work. When a poem springs almost spontaneously from the united feeling of many people it is not surprising that it should keep for centuries the magic of emotional power over others. Addison, in that essay of his on folk-ballads in *The Spectator* which did much to bring them to the attention of more literary people, quoted the good Sir Philip Sidney's feeling remark over the ballad of Chevy Chase: "I never heard the good old song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart more moved than with a trumpet." So it is with all who read ballads sympathetically.

These folk-ballads are believed by most scholars to have been produced by "communal effort"—to have had not one author, but many. There was no thought of writing them out; the people who built them up were unacquainted with the use of pens. The songs filtered down through the centuries by word of mouth, father to son to grandson throughout generations of rustic folk; and never until recent years has there been any serious effort to collect them. Naturally, there are now many versions of each. Their subjects are those which might be expected to appeal to the unlettered especially—famous crimes, outlawry, popular tragedies, disasters. The great collection is Professor Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*.

There has been some interest recently in the collection of American folk-ballads. Songs of the cowboys, of the frontiersmen, and of the moun-

taineers, for example, have been edited. Many of these are mere variants of ballads fetched from old England, and some which have grown out of distinctly American conditions and events are apparently adaptations of older ballads. As well known as any is the Jesse James ballad, one of the versions of which begins,

"Jesse James was a lad that killed a-many a man;
He robbed the Danville train.
But that dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard
Has laid poor Jesse in his grave."

Literary ballads, deliberately composed and written down by poets, must, obviously, have grown out of these primitive folk-products. Closest to their original were the old ballads written about some nine-days wonder and hawked about the streets by a rhymester who wished to turn an honest penny. Benjamin Franklin when a boy sold ballads of his own on the latest sensation afforded by the pirates. Street ballads have all but disappeared now; the people get their crime sensations from the newspapers. Similar in theme to both folk and street ballads are many "literary ballads." Scott's "Lochinvar," Rossetti's "Sister Helen," Keats' "La Belle Dame sans Merci," Longfellow's "The Wreck of the Hesperus," and Whittier's "Skipper Ireson's Ride" are examples. Perhaps the finest ballad in American literature is Lanier's "Revenge of Hamish."

The whole field of short narrative poetry is a very attractive one. For the beginner in the reading of verse—for the reader who is not quite

sure that he "likes" poetry—the short narrative is the thing. Tennyson, William Morris, parts of Browning, Longfellow, Whittier, Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*—such as these are especially to be recommended for easy reading. Chaucer requires translation for readers unacquainted with Middle English, but it is worth conquering the slight language difficulty to read him in the original. Certain contemporary writers, as Kipling, Noyes, and Frost are easily read. Kipling's "Danny Deever" is akin to the folk-ballad; and so, in a lesser degree, is Noyes' romantic and fine poem, "The Highwayman," one of the very best of modern literary ballads. There is not much of balladry in Frost, but a very honest and effective telling of simple farm stories of New England.

More ambitious is the longer narrative poem. There have been many such in English literature, from the mediæval romances to the contemporary work of Masfield and Neihardt. Very many, certainly, have been forgotten, nor should I venture to recommend to any but students the *Confessio Amantis* or *The Mirror for Magistrates* (though both contain famous story material). No more can Campbell's or Southey's long poems be salvaged from limbo; but the case is far different with Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," and Keats' "Eve of St. Agnes." There are certainly few greater poems in the English tongue than these. Scott's long poems retain some shadow of their original popularity through reading in schools, and Byron's romances are very

pleasant reading to-day. Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum" is a poem of finished art and great power. Browning's longer poems are not for weaklings, but they have adequate rewards for the strong. John Masefield is the great master of this kind of poetry among living Englishmen. His *Dauber* and *Right Royal*, for example, have the interest of novels. The one is a sea-story, the other a story of racing, while *The Everlasting Mercy* is mainly the story of a prize fight. But I must not catalogue; the reader who likes long narratives in verse can find many minor ones in great variety.

There remains for this chapter a consideration of a kind of narrative poetry somewhat more ambitious than those that have been discussed—the epic cycle. Of course there are elements of the epic in the ballads and in most narrative poetry. Indeed, all verse narratives are sometimes loosely classified as epical. But I have chosen to separate my consideration of the great racial epics from that of shorter narratives, and to speak of epic cycles under the latter classification.

A chief difficulty in regard to the great epic is in the fact of its length, for it is not possible for any but a very great poet to maintain interest and emotion at a poetical level in long stretches, and very pedestrian and prosy verse is sure to find place. Even Homer nods. Poe thought that a long poem was a contradiction in terms. Some modern poets have attempted to solve the difficulty by organizing the epic material with which they wished to deal into a series of somewhat

shorter narrative poems, the whole called an epic cycle; and thus we have Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, Longfellow's "Hiawatha," and the series of western hero-tales upon which John G. Neihardt is engaged.

Tennyson's material was the mass of legend centered upon the figure of King Arthur—a body of story which had been used over and over again by writers in French and English as well as in many other languages, ever since Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote his romantic history in Latin in the twelfth century; but Tennyson provided for his Victorian audience a Victorian Arthur. He was within his rights: he was writing poetry, not history, and he produced an epic cycle which is one of the high marks of nineteenth century verse. In form, in emotion, in interest, and in significance, the work is successful.

We may, however, regret the loss of the more primitive virtues which the knights of the round table have in some of the old days—a loss that seems meagerly compensated by Victorian morality. Edwin Arlington Robinson's interpretation of the legend is more modern. We may regret, too, that Longfellow's Indian in "Hiawatha" is, as someone has remarked, "a gentleman and a scholar." Yet "Hiawatha," too, has much of epic mood—something of racial movement; and it seems to me to be, on the whole, the most important work of its author.

John G. Neihardt's epic cycle of western America is in certain respects the most important achievement of contemporary American poetry. Only

three of the five poems are finished, but enough has been done to indicate the high place that the cycle will take. Nothing more thoroughly American (in the big and good sense of that word) and nothing more powerful or readable has been written by a modern poet. The materials which Mr. Neihardt uses are taken from the American frontier of fifty to seventy-five years ago. Resourceful fur-traders, stout Indian fighters, explorers, scouts, hunters, and the Indians themselves people Neihardt's pages; and heroic episodes beguile even the inexperienced reader of poetry into a thrilled interest. Old Hugh Glass, who, though mangled in a battle with a bear and left for dead by his companions, *crawls* a hundred miles to the nearest fort, all through one summer, dragging a shattered leg behind him; Carpenter, Fink, and Talbeau, that rough trio of friends whose alliance was broken at last, though Fink and Talbeau later fled the prairie fire together—such characters go to make up Neihardt's gallery of epic figures.

To give my readers an idea of Mr. Neihardt's descriptive ability, I quote a passage from "Hugh Glass," describing a summer storm on the prairie:

"But hark! What spirits whisper in the gloom?
 What sibilation of conspiracies
 Ruffles the hush—or murmuring of trees,
 Ghosts of the ancient forest—or old rain,
 In some hallucination of the plain,
 A frustrate phantom mourning? All around,
 That e'er evolving, ne'er resolving sound
 Grotes in the stifling hollow of the night.

Then—once—twice—thrice—a blade of blinding light
 Ripped up the heavens, and the deluge came—
 A burst of wind and water, noise and flame
 That hurled the watcher flat upon the ground.
 A moment past Hugh famished; now, half drowned,
 He gasped or breath amid the hurtling drench.
 So might a testy god, long sought to quench
 A puny thirst, pour wassail, hurling after
 The crashing bowl with wild sardonic laughter
 To see man wrestle with his answered prayer!

Prone to the roaring flaw and ceaseless flare,
 The man drank deeply with the drinking grass;
 Until it seemed the storm would never pass
 But ravin down the painted murk for aye.
 When had what dreamer seen a glaring day
 And leagues of prairie pantingly aquiver?
 Flame, flood, wind, noise and darkness were a river
 Tearing a cosmic channel to no sea.

The tortured night wore on; then suddenly
 Peace fell. Remotely the retreating Wrath
 Trailed dull, reluctant thunders in its path,
 And up along a broken stair of clouds
 The Dawn came creeping whitely. Like a shroud
 Gray vapors clung along the sodden plain.
 Up rose the sun to wipe the final stain
 Of fury from the sky and drink the mist.
 Against a flawless arch of amethyst
 The butte soared, like a soul serene and white
 Because of the katharsis of the night.

Here are great poems: I can but urge all who have
 not read "The Song of Three Friends," "The
 Song of Hugh Glass," and the new "Song of the
 Indian Wars" (which contains the best Indian

fighting to be found in poetry) to do themselves the pleasure of becoming acquainted with this epic cycle.

Narrative poetry, in fine, offers a rich field for the reader. There is a very special appeal in a work in which story interest is united with the high charm of literary form that belongs to poetry, with the added attraction of passages both of philosophical force and of emotional and dramatic intensity. Such works, too, are especially pleasant for reading aloud. Finally, there is great variety to choose from. From the high argument of the great racial epic down to the humble ballad of the people the way is lined with poetry which is readable, enjoyable, memorable, and in the greatest measure and the best sense, cultural.

BOOK LIST XI

Collections are in Part I, and some long narrative poems not in the collections named are listed in Part II.

Part I

Allingham, Wm., *The Ballad Book*. Macmillan.

Armes, W. D., *Old English Ballads and Songs*. Pocket Cl.

Bryant, Edw. A., *The Best English and Scottish Ballads*. Crowell.

Burrell, A., *Book of Heroic Verse*. Ev.

Child, J. F., *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. (5 vols.). Houghton.

Gummere, F. B., *Old English Ballads*. Ginn.

Jewett, Sophie, *Folk Ballads of Southern Europe*. Putnam.

- Johnson, R. B., *A Book of British Ballads*. Ev.
 Lomax, J. A., *Cowboy Songs*. Macmillan.
 Mabie, H. W., *A Book of Old English Ballads*. Grosset.
 Pound, Louise, *American Ballads and Songs*. Mod.
 Students L.
 Quiller-Couch, A., *Oxford Book of Ballads*. Oxford.
 Teter, George E., *One Hundred Narrative Poems*.
 Scott Foresman.
 Watrous, G. A., *Three Narrative Poems* (Rime of the
 Ancient Mariner, Sohrab and Rustum, Enoch Arden).
 Academy Cl., Allyn & Bacon.

Part II

- Arnold, *Sohrab and Rustum*. E. R.
 Browning, *The Ring and the Book*. Ev.; *Men and Women*, in Vol. 2, *Poems*. Ev.
 Byron, "Mazeppa," "Prisoner of Chillon." In *Childe Harold and Other Poems*. E. R.
 Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*. Ev.
 Keats, "The Eve of St. Agnes." In *Poems*. Ev.
 Longfellow, "Hiawatha." R. L. S.
 Lowell, "The Vision of Sir Launfal." R. L. S.
 Masfield, *Dauber; Right Royal*. Macmillan.
 Morris, *The Life and Death of Jason*. Ev.
 Neihardt, *Songs of Three Friends and Hugh Glass*.
 Mod. Readers L.; *Song of the Indian Wars*. Macmillan.
 Piper, E. F., *Barbed Wire and Wayfarers*. Macmillan.
 Scott, *Marmion; Lady of the Lake*. Ev.
 Tennyson, *Idylls of the King*. E. R.

XII. THE CHARM OF THE LYRIC

The most personal thing in all literature is the lyric poem. In it the poet pours out his heart—his inmost hopes, passions, fears; and secrets he would be unlikely to tell to his closest friend are published in his poem.

Moreover, personality functions in the lyric in another way. The poet is so much a part of everything about him—his individuality is so submerged in the whole—that the things he writes of are intimately related to himself. This psychical state of the poet is essentially, as John G. Neihardt has made plain, that which oriental seers of very ancient times described as the immersion of *atman* (the individual) in *Brahman* (the whole). Mr. Neihardt goes on to point out, in his profoundly stimulating little book *Poetic Values*, that while physical science sees all objects from the one fixed viewpoint of normal “waking” consciousness, the artist utilizes the “expanding consciousness”: *his* viewpoint is a synthesis of the “waking” consciousness with those other mental conditions which are usually called dream states, but which have quite as much validity on any but the bread-and-butter plane as the so-called normal state. At any rate, this outlook of the artist’s, far richer and more nearly true as it is, comes nearer to making possible the explanation of the relationship of man’s

spirit to the universe than any narrower point of view. Let us note how three great poets have spoken of the psychic relationship of their own personalities to their environments.

Wordsworth, telling of his childhood, wrote: "I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or a tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality." Likewise Goethe wrote of some sheep in a etching by Roos: "I always feel uneasy when I look at these beasts. Their state, so limited, dull, gaping, and dreamy, excites in me such sympathy that I fear I shall become a sheep, and think the artist must have been one." Let me quote a third poet-witness to this phenomenon of the poetic imagination. Says Byron:

"I live not in myself, but I become
 Portion of that around me . . .
 Are not the mountains, waves, and skies a part
 Of me and of my soul, as I of them?"

So far does the poet carry this merging and personalizing process that the very figures of speech with which he adorns his verse habitually ascribe personality to inanimate objects: we say he personifies things.

Any great lyric might be quoted in illustration of this principle of the poet's mind. Let us take Shelley's matchless "Ode to the West Wind" as our example. It begins with a beautiful three-fold apostrophe to the west wind, which I beg

you to read, and then proceeds, still addressing the west wind:

“If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne’er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

“Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O, wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?”

This moving poem is a fine example of the personalizing process I have discussed; you will have found in it also an emotion so strong that it can be expressed only in the form of prayer—a prayer to the West Wind. This leads me to a second observation upon the nature of lyric poetry. I have said that the lyric is the most personal form of literature; it is also the most emotional form. It is “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,” to use Wordsworth’s phrase. The emotion may be that of love; from the scriptural “Song of Songs” to the verse of the latest magazine we have had no dearth of love-lyrics. Or it may be sorrow, as in the dirge in *Cymbeline*, or Poe’s “Ulalume”; or indignation, as in Whittier’s anti-slavery poems; or patriotism, as in Burns’ “Scots Wha Hae Wi’ Wallace Bled”; or religious exaltation as in the *Psalms* or Wesley’s “Jesus, Lover of My Soul” or Herbert’s poems; or it may be convivial gayety, as in Tom Moore’s poems, or in the old drinking songs. It may be any emotion known to the human heart; but every true lyric is founded in the strong feeling of the poet, and succeeds only when it awakens an echo in the feelings of the reader. The reader who does not experience some emotional reaction of his own upon reading a beautiful poem has not only not learned how to read poetry; he has not learned how to live. A good critic recently remarked that he could always tell when he read a good poem because it made the short hairs on the back of his neck stand up. That was good criticism, for the critic was relying upon a physical

manifestation of his emotional reaction: he knew definitely that he had been "thrilled." A beautiful poem always brings a film of tears to my eyes, though I may read it for the hundredth time; and I can scarcely trust my voice in reading certain poems like Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality" or Lanier's "Marshes of Glynn" aloud.

In the third place, let me say that the lyric is, also, the most musical form in all literature. Not only did it originate in the song duly provided with musical accompaniment, but many writers of lyrics in modern times have had musical airs in mind when composing their verses. Burns, for example, said, "Until I am complete master of a tune in my own singing (such as it is) I can never compose to it. . . I walk out, sit down now and then . . . humming the air with the verses I have composed." Burns thus used old Scotch airs for many of his poems:

"Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream."

Sidney Lanier said, "Music is love in search of a word," thus welding words, emotion, and music in one indivisible whole. Ben Jonson's "Song to Celia," beginning "Drink to me only with thine eyes," Tom Moore's "Believe Me, if all Those Endearing Young Charms," Burns' "Auld Lang Syne," and Shakespeare's "Hark! Hark! The Lark at Heaven's Gate Sings" with its music by Schubert, are examples of songs that we can

scarcely think of outside their musical settings. Stephen Collins Foster wrote both words and music to his negro melodies, with the result that "Old Folks at Home" and "Old Black Joe" have perfect harmony between lines and setting. The words of Foster's songs, however, can scarcely be considered great poetry; and the so-called lyrics of most of the popular songs of to-day are much worse than their jazz settings,—that is, beneath contempt. But the great love-songs of the world are so musical that they almost sing themselves, and the same thing is true of the finer lyrics dealing with other passions than love. Take the great war-songs for example; in American literature we have one great example—Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic," beginning:

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the
 Lord;
 He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of
 wrath are stored;
 He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible
 swift sword;
 His truth is marching on."

We all know how Mrs. Howe wrote these noble lines to an air which had won wide popularity as a marching song during our Civil War, but which had, up to that time, been the setting for doggerel.

Religious feeling has also inspired many beautiful songs, though the weight of theological ideas has often crushed and mangled the delicate spirit of poesy in our hymns. It has been pointed out that the words of no other poems are uttered so often as those of the well-known hymns. There

are few greater achievements than the writing of a great hymn. Whittier's "Eternal Goodness," Addison's hymn beginning "The spacious firmament on high," and Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light" are a few of many examples of literary excellence in English hymnology.

Thus we find the lyric to be a poem in which personality expresses itself in emotion and music. But there are certain lyrical forms that show greater or less variation from these principles I have been discussing. We have, for example, the ode, in which high emotion is expressed in a poem too long for the musical setting of a song. The ode is more like a symphony; indeed we have Lanier's ode of that name in the composition of which symphonic principles are employed. The ode has unity in variety; it employs diversity of meters with irregularity in length of line; and it deals always with noble subjects in an elevated mood. Let me take for illustration a part of the sixth strophe of Lowell's "Commemoration Ode" of 1865—the passage on Abraham Lincoln:

“ . . . Such was he, our Martyr-Chief,
Whom late the Nation he had led,
With ashes on her head,
Wept with the passion of an angry grief;
Forgive me, if from present things I turn
To speak what in my heart will beat and burn,
And hang my wreath on his world-honored urn.
Nature, they say, doth dote,
And cannot make a man
Save on some worn-out plan,
Repeating us by rote:

For him her Old-World moulds aside she threw,
 And choosing sweet clay from the breast
 Of the unexhausted West,
 With stuff untainted shaped a hero new,
 Wise, steadfast in the strength of God, and true . . .
 His was no lonely mountain-peak of mind,
 Thrusting to thin air o'er our cloudy bars,
 A sea-mark now, now lost in vapors blind;
 Fruitful and friendly for all human kind,
 Yet also nigh to heaven and loved of loftiest stars.
 Nothing of Europe here,
 Or, then, of Europe fronting mornward still,
 Ere any names of Serf and Peer
 Could Nature's equal scheme deface
 And thwart her genial will;
 Here was a type of the true elder race,
 And one of Plutarch's men talked with us face to
 face.
 I praise him not; it were too late;
 And some innative weakness there must be
 In him who condescends to victory
 Such as the Present gives, and cannot wait,
 Safe in himself as in a fate.
 So always firmly he:
 He knew to bide his time,
 And can his fame abide,
 Still patient in his simple faith sublime,
 Till the wise years decide.
 Great Captains, with their guns and drums,
 Disturb our judgment of the hour,
 But at last silence comes:
 These all are gone, and, standing like a tower,
 Our children shall behold his fame.
 The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,
 Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
 New birth of our new soil, the first American.

This is a memorial ode, and thus it is in theme an elegy. But elegies may take many other forms—that of the dirge, funeral song, lyric sequence, sonnet, or pastoral elegy, for example. One of the loveliest of English poems is Milton's "Lycidas" in which the classical pastoral element is preserved and the poet clothes in the image of a shepherd lamenting the death of a companion his own grief for a schoolmate at Cambridge. Poe said that the theme most appropriate for poetry was "the death of a beautiful woman," and he unites love with death as a theme when he adds that "the lips best suited for such a topic are those of a bereaved lover." And Shelley declared that "our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought," while Whitman says: "Death is beautiful. (What indeed is finally beautiful except death and love?)" A very perfect song upon these wedded themes, and one which I cannot forbear to quote, is Christina Rossetti's:

"When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows;
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain;

And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget."

The sonnet, with its specific laws and standards, is a fascinating subject of study which I cannot dwell upon here. It is more intellectual, as a rule, than some other lyric forms, and less spontaneously musical; but it has a perfect and gem-like beauty, when it is well done, that makes it "a joy forever." There are other fixed forms, chiefly imported from France, such as the triolet and rondeau, which are, as a rule, lighter in mood than the sonnet.

I must, I am sure, say something about free verse. This form abandons not only rhyme, as blank verse does, but meter also; it has rhythm, which prose may have indeed, but it adheres to no rules of scansion—that is, regularity of the recurrent stress or accent in the line. Older critics, as far back as Aristotle (notably Sidney and Shelley among English writers), have recognized the poetical element in imaginative prose, without advocating or practicing free verse. And though it has been written in bits here and there for hundreds of years in English, and universally in certain other languages, free verse has never been widely practiced by English writers until recent poets, who generally acknowledge Whitman's artistic fatherhood, took it up. There is no possibility of its supplanting metrical verse, but English poetry may probably see more of it hereafter than in former times. There has been a

great deal of hot charging and counter-charging in the war over free verse; the matter, however, will not be settled by the critics, but by the poets. So long as the free versifiers write beautiful and moving lines and call them poetry, we shall accept their work gratefully without quarreling too much over terms. As I have said before, artists are their own lawgivers. Note, if you please, the striking imagination, the sincerity, and the very rhythms of the hills in this free verse by Lee Weber, a young Omaha poet, which I take from *The Midland*:

“I have felt the broad backs of the hills
Under me like giant horses,
And I have ridden, ridden, ridden,
Ridden down the night,
Past the comets,
Past the stars
I have ridden far.

I have felt the rhythm of the earth,
The very veins and arteries, the streams,
Beat under me.
I see the grassy fetlocks,
The heaving flanks—
Tough tree, and bony rock
Are ribs of giant horses
Beneath my knees.

They run unbridled,
Toss and throw their manes about—
The great trees toss.
The vibrant earth whinnies and snorts,
And I exult.

The wind has beaten laughter into me.
The huge, old hill-horses
Lift me up and up—

The hills are under me.”

“We are all poets,” said Carlyle, “when we read a poem well.” Let us read, re-read, memorize, recite, chant, and sing the great lyrics until we have them really and truly “by heart.” Many modern poets—W. B. Yeats and Vachel Lindsay are examples—have been greatly interested in leading people in a return to the primitive chanting of poetry. ’Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished.

That great anthology, Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury*, may serve as a guide to the best standard English lyrics, while for contemporary poetry Miss Rittenhouse or Mr. Untermeyer or others may guide us. But I am inclined to the belief that a better way for the reader who is not very experienced in poetry is to find two or three favorite authors, and to read them faithfully and lovingly.

A love for lyric poetry is greatly to be prized. It broadens and cultivates the sympathies; it enlarges the limits of the world for us; it quickens our sense of beauty. As one’s love for poetry grows, one becomes, I am sure, less a brute and more a man; less a clod and more an immortal spirit. And, finally, when we have divine poesy for guide and comfort, we can confront the pains and disappointments of life with clearer spirit and surer faith.

BOOK LIST XII

Following are some collections of lyrics. This list should be supplemented by items from the more general Book List IX, Part II.

Ault, Norman, *Elizabethan Lyrics*. Holt.

Bullen, A. H., *Lyrics from the Song Books of the Elizabethan Age* (2 vols.). Scribner.

Hepple, N., *Lyrical Forms in English*. Cambridge Press.

Knowles, F. L., *Golden Treasury of American Songs and Lyrics*. Page.

Lockwood, Laura, *Sonnets*. R. L. S.

Palgrave, F. T., *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*. Ev.

Robertson, Wm., *The Golden Book of English Sonnets*. Lippincott.

Schelling, F. E., *Seventeenth Century Lyrics*. Ginn.

XIII. THE READING OF PLAYS

When we take up plays as reading matter, we find ourselves once more facing the question, how much of our subject matter is literature, and how much something else? Or is some particular play literature at all? As a matter of fact playwrights do not, as a rule, write for readers, but for hearers and watchers. Literature is not much in their minds as an end in itself; if they think of it at all it is as a by-product. The Greek playwright Menander was asked how he was getting on with his new comedy. "Very well," said he; "it is all done. I have only to write the lines." Molière definitely disclaimed writing for publication. Shakespeare certainly wrote for the stage rather than for the library; he considered his sonnets and narrative poems suitable for publication in book form, but when his plays got into print it was independently of their author. Exigencies of stage production dominated; when distinctively literary means were used, it was to contribute to the stage effect. In the composite "art of the theater" to-day literary principles and effects play but a minor part, as a rule, and may be subservient not only to the histrionic art, but also to that of the designer, the scene-lighter, the musician, the dancer, and the painter. Indeed, the theater has gone so far in correlation (or shall I say confusion?) of the arts that Granville

Barker can define drama as "anything that can be made effective upon the stage of a theater by human agency."

I speak of the employment of these various arts upon the stage not to condemn them—for I believe that the very "effectiveness" of Mr. Barker's definition is sufficient answer to criticism—but to point the way to proper methods of reading plays. The reader, sitting in his library, must have stage, setting, and actors before him; and he can, of course, achieve this only by the use of a very active imagination. Stevenson says somewhere that Fleeming Jenkin could visualize a whole drama from the printed page; but, says Stevenson, this gift was "the fruit of much knowledge and some imagination, comparable to that of reading score." Eugene O'Neill, who is not a frequenter of the theater, does somewhat the same thing. Professor Brander Matthews, commenting on Stevenson's observation, remarks that such an achievement "is not easy; indeed, to accomplish it completely is not possible; but the effort, however feeble it may be, is worth while." Worth while it certainly is. To visualize the play "completely" is not necessary to enjoyment or satisfaction; most people do not see everything even in the theater; but a considerable degree of imaginative realization is easy enough and very necessary. The appearance of the characters, the main features of the setting, the chief action upon the stage, the tones of emotion in the voices, are not difficult to imagine if one really tries. It is a great help to read a play coöperatively. Let a group of

three or four people, each provided with a copy of the play, divide the characters among them for reading; and of course the more expressively they read and the more they work out the action of the piece, the more complete will be the realization of it. This is a very good method to use in reading Shakespeare or Molière. It is also practicable in the reading of Athenian tragedy, in which there are but two or three characters on the stage at a time.

One element that adds to the readableness of a play is the lyric or song feature of it. This gives a special pleasure to reading the Greek plays; especially in the translations of Gilbert Murray or Lewis Campbell. Greek drama grew out of the song as it did out of the dance, and lyricism is always very much at the service of the Greek stage. The lyricism of Shakespeare, so notable in plays like *The Tempest* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, is one of his great charms. In modern plays, however, which are mostly in prose, the lyrical factor is less used.

I have sometimes thought that the tendency noticeable in many contemporary plays to subdue action and movement on the stage to dialogue and theme must help to promote the reading of them away from the theater. Production adds less to these plays than to those in which the action is highly important. In many modern problem-plays, as those by Ibsen, Shaw, Galsworthy, or Brieux, action itself is almost abandoned, and we have very talky scenes almost devoid of physical movement. Aristotle defined drama as

"the imitation of an action," but action may be spiritual as well as physical, and in the Greek masterpieces there is little movement on the stage. Think of the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus, or the *Trojan Women* of Euripides for example. Whether or not it is because of some such emphasis on ideas rather than on physical action in certain modern plays, surely drama is being read to-day as never before: publishers' lists will prove that, if proof is needed. I do not mean that the talky play usurps the modern theater, however: of course it does not. At the other extreme from it is the play which depends much on spectacle and little on dialogue. I have seen few more impressive productions than Mr. Max Reinhardt's *The Miracle*, which is all pantomime, and no more literary than a superlative motion picture.

To sum up, then, the literary element in dramatic production is not of first importance, and a play can be appreciated in reading only if the reader realizes imaginatively some of the elements which do not appear upon the printed page. Let us now consider very briefly the question of where the inquiring reader may find the most rewarding dramatic work for armchair enjoyment.

There are, scattered all through literature, certain poems written in dramatic form but not intended for the stage. We call them closet dramas: the Biblical *Job*, Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, Byron's *Manfred*, and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* may stand as examples. These may be read as great poems. Besides these closet dramas, there are those poetical plays which were intended

for the stage but either failed before their audiences, or never succeeded in being produced—unwillingly closeted, as it were. Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Browning, Tennyson, Longfellow, Swinburne, and many others wrote such plays; and some of them are very good reading, though it need not be said that failure on the stage is no omen of success in the library. I commend to you, however, certain plays by Browning and Tennyson, as *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon*, *Queen Mary*, *Becket*.

But the plays most worth our attention as readers of literature are those poetical tragedies which are both great dramas and great poetry. In certain respects, indeed, poetical tragedy is at the very height of literary achievement. It deals very directly with its problems: it is more direct and objective than the novel. Its themes are the greatest problems of human life. It portrays the human will in conflict with fate, and its commentary on that greatest of conflicts is nobly serious. Pity and fear were the emotions chiefly excited by tragedy in Aristotle's time, and they remain the great tragic emotions to-day.

Aristotle's *Poetics* was based upon the plays of the three great Athenian tragic poets—Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Some knowledge of the work of these three is necessary to any education in literature; and in spite of the changes in customs and religious ideas, it is extraordinary how fresh and powerful the Greek dramas are to-day. Some years ago Miss Margaret Anglin made a striking success with *Electra* in Carnegie Hall

in New York, and more recently Sir John Martin-Harvey and his company moved popular audiences nightly for a surprisingly long run in *Œdipus the King*. The great human appeal of *Œdipus* was fully demonstrated, and the transcendent mood of pity in the last scene where *Œdipus* lies blind and abased gave the audience real experience of that tragic katharsis which is the great spiritual work of such a play.

But for English-speaking and reading peoples Shakespeare is of course the great exponent of tragedy. Comparable only to the tragic end of *Œdipus the King* is that of *King Lear*, where another undone king is shown us—but old, this time, and half-mad, and bearing his dead daughter in his arms. “Break, break, heart; I prithee break!” he pleads. And the scene on the stormy heath—there is no grander, madder, more heart-breaking passage in literature. Dowden compared the play of *King Lear* to a Gothic cathedral: it is as apt a comparison as could be made between examples of two arts.

There is something Gothic, too, about Goethe’s *Faust*. It is a deeply philosophical drama, but at the same time poignantly human. Who will not weep at the ruin of Gretchen’s innocent hopes? Who will not sympathize with Faust’s soul-struggles?—Only one for whom the world is no longer filled with tormenting problems; only one who is dead to ambition, to struggle, to aspiration.

Faust, like the Greek plays, was founded on a tale well known to its audience, while *Lear* was built on an old English legendary history. But

Ibsen's *Ghosts*, like most modern tragedies, is built about a contemporary problem—a problem as old, to be sure, as mankind, but placed and defined in contemporary life. It is unlike these other dramas I have mentioned in that it is written in prose, but it is like them in that it is sheer, naked tragedy inspiring a very high degree of pity and terror. It has shocked many people by its free and individual dealing with social problems, but it is this very directness that gives it much of its power. The moral is Biblical; it is the "sins of the fathers" theme. The closely connected minor theme of the danger of repression in a thin environment (and this before the time of Freud or American midwestern fiction) fits very well with the literature of to-day.

When we turn to comedy, we have a richly entertaining field. From Aristophanes with his free fancy, bold caricature, lyricism, and satire, to the many delightful figures of Shakespeare's comic muse, the way is an easy one. Perhaps the greatest comic figure in English literature is that of Sir John Falstaff. For pure animal spirits, the untiring soul of roystering, give us the fat knight, Sir Jack. True, he is sensual; true, he is without honor; but what an inexhaustible well of wit he is! What a master of fancy! What a magnificent liar! Molière's *Tartuffe* is as famous a figure in French comedy as Falstaff in English, but in Molière we have more biting satire. Sir John is a coward and a braggart, but we can love him, as Prince Hal did; while *Tartuffe* is a hypocrite and a villain and we must hate him as

Dorine did. More like Molière was the English Congreve. Society comedies continue through English literature in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, and Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, and others of much less importance, to Pinero, Jones, and the present playwrights.

Contemporary drama is available to readers in many collections. People are evidently learning, as I have said, to read prose plays, and to like them. Of all poetical dramas written within the present generation Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* is the greatest, and luckily we have an excellent English version of it in Brian Hooker's translation. The play is all Cyrano's, and Cyrano is one of the truest, bravest, most delightful braggarts that ever made a gesture. He won nothing of what the world called success—neither honor nor power nor the woman he loved; but never for a moment did he lose his spirit; his plume was ever carried high, and in the last act the duke says, "I have everything; he has nothing; yet I should be proud to shake his hand." Sir James M. Barrie's plays, too, are very delightful reading; none surpasses him in fancy, whimsy, and humor. Maeterlinck's plays are distinctly literary, though they are not easy to translate on account of their essential poetry. Those of both Shaw and Galsworthy read particularly well; one cannot help believing that Shaw writes almost as much for book as for actor's script. The Irish drama—particularly the plays of John M. Synge and Lord Dunsany—must appeal to all lovers of essential poetry.

There has been little poetical drama in America. William Vaughn Moody's dramatic trilogy of which only the first two plays, *The Fire-Bringer* and *The Masque of Judgment* are complete, is a great exception. But Moody's prose play *The Great Divide* is much better known than his poetic dramas.

The collections by Professor Quinn and Mr. Moses contain the best of the earlier American plays. Of contemporary drama much has been printed in many collections. I might mention Mr. Augustus Thomas' *As a Man Thinks* as an example of a problem play fully dramatized, and David Belasco's *The Return of Peter Grimm* as an interesting study in that borderland between this world and the next, of which use is so effectively made also in the recent *Outward Bound* by Mr. Sutton Vane. A very unusual and crudely powerful play is the recent *Processional* by John Howard Lawson.

"Unusual" and "crudely powerful" are good epithets, too, for the work of Eugene O'Neill, probably the most important present-day American playwright. *Beyond the Horizon* and *Anna Christie* are plays that anyone who wishes to keep abreast of important artistic movements in this country must read. Mr. O'Neill is a significant, arresting, and sincere playwright, and each of his successive dramas is worth your attention.

After this hop-skip-and-jump through the field of written drama, I must halt for breath to say, in conclusion, that the reader who is unacquainted with the pleasures of play-reading is missing a great delight. Let him associate a friend or two

with him, and let the group draw upon the manifold treasures that await them. The average reader knows a few plays of Shakespeare, but how many of the others I have mentioned does he know? And they are only a few from many.

BOOK LIST XIII

Part II contains the names of a few plays and collections by single dramatists whose work is not found in the anthologies which comprise Part I. No abridgments are included. Appleton's and Samuel French (New York) publish series of single plays.

Part I

- Baker, Geo. F., *Modern American Plays*. Harcourt.
 Cohen, Helen, *Longer Plays by American Authors; One-Act Plays by American Authors*. Harcourt.
 Dickinson, T. H., *Chief Contemporary Dramatists* (2 vols.). Houghton; *Wisconsin Plays*. Houghton.
 Gayley, C. M., *Representative English Comedies* (3 vols.). Macmillan.
 Gosse, E., *Restoration Plays*. Ev.
 Lewis, B. R., *Contemporary One-Act Plays*. Scribner.
 Manly, J. M., *Specimens of Pre-Shakespearian Drama* (2 vols.). Ginn.
 Matthews, Brander, *Chief European Dramatists*. Houghton.
 Matthews and Lieder, *Chief British Dramatists*. Houghton.
 Mayorga, M. G., *Representative One-Act Plays by American Authors*. Little, Brown.
 Moses, M. J., *Representative Plays by American Authors*. Dutton.

Neilson, W. A., *Chief Elizabethan Dramatists Excluding Shakespeare*. Houghton.

Tatlock and Martin, *Representative English Plays*. Century.

Part II

Æschylus in English Verse, translated by Lewis Campbell. Oxford Press.

Barrie, J. M., *What Every Woman Knows*. Scribner.

Drinkwater, John, *Abraham Lincoln*. Houghton.

Dunsany, Lord, *Five Plays*. Kennerly.

Euripides' Plays, translated by Sir Gilbert Murray and published separately. Oxford Press.

Galsworthy, John, *Plays*, 1st and 5th series. Scribner.

Gibson, W. W., *Daily Bread*. Macmillan.

Goethe, Wolfgang, *Faust*. Ev.

Ibsen, Henrik, *Ghosts; A Doll's House*. Mod. L.

Molière, J. B. P., *Plays*. Mod. L.

Moody, Wm. Vaughn, *The Great Divide*. Macmillan.

O'Neill, Eugene, *Beyond the Horizon; Anna Christie*, Boni & L.

Rostand, Edmond, *Cyrano de Bergerac* (trans. Brian Hooker). Holt.

Shakespeare, Wm., *Complete Dramatic and Poetic Works*. Houghton.

Shaw, G. B., *Candida; Saint Joan*. Brentano.

Sophocles in English Verse, translated by Lewis Campbell. Oxford Press.

Synge, John, *The Playboy of the Western World*. Luce (Boston).

XIV. BIBLE-READING

“England,” wrote Victor Hugo once, “has two books, one which she has made and one which has made her: Shakespeare and the Bible.” This is more than an epigram. The importance of the Bible in English life and literature is apparent to the most superficial student of English history, the most casual reader of English literature. In America too the phenomenon has been quite as apparent. For two hundred years of New England there were three books in nearly every home—the *New England Primer*, the *Bay Psalm Book*, and the Bible. The American Bible Society alone has, within a little over half a century, distributed over a hundred million Bibles. So woven into the very warp and woof of the thinking and writing of English-speaking peoples are the terms, images, and ideas of the King James translation of the Scriptures, that most people do not realize even the half of their indebtedness. Certainly no other book has exercised an influence even distantly approaching that of the Bible upon popular thought or upon literary composition in the English language during the three hundred years since James’s fifty-four translators made this famous version.

One totally unacquainted with Bible lore would be greatly puzzled by a large proportion of the painting, the architecture, the music, the history,

the philosophy, and the literature of the Christian world of the last nineteen centuries. What would Michelangelo, Rubens, Rembrandt, Dürer, Giotto mean to him? How much would be lacking in his appreciation of a Gothic cathedral! How crippled he would be in his comprehension of the course of thought throughout these centuries! "Without the Bible," said President Butler not long ago, "it is impossible to understand the literature of the English language from Chaucer to Browning." He was referring merely to the allusions which have their source in the Bible, but the fusion of the Bible with the world we live in goes deeper than that. The Bible is the sacred book of the Christian religion, and in certain of its parts, it is the textbook or primary exposition of the ideas of that religion. The first four books of the New Testament are devoted to the telling of the story of Jesus and the recording of his teachings; and those teachings, however perverted they may have been by his followers, however ill-followed even when understood, have nevertheless been far more important in the life of western civilization than any other set of concepts that has been promulgated. So indubitable is this fact that it is almost a truism.

It is not only that the abstract ideas of the Bible, ethical, social, and religious as they are, have permeated our thinking; there is also a body of literature consisting of character-sketches, biographies, history, short tales, lyric poetry, etc., the subject matter of which has become an intellectual background in the thinking of the people. Upon

the stream of intellectual and emotional consciousness that has flowed through these nearly two thousand years has floated the argosy of this literature, and it has come down to us even more richly laden than when it set out.

Suppose, as an example of the richness of this freight, we take for our momentary inspection one of the hundreds of interesting characters that live and act and talk in the pages of the Bible. Let us choose Esther, a young Israelitish girl who found herself suddenly and unexpectedly the center of an intrigue in the luxurious and barbaric court of Xerxes the Great of Persia, and by her brave and clever management of affairs at that crisis became a national heroine. We all like Esther, I suppose, and admire her intrepidity, especially when she decides to put her life in the balance for the sake of her race and go to the king unsummoned, "which is not according to the law; and—" she adds in her message to Mordecai, like the heroine she was, "and if I perish, I perish." But one of the finest things about these Biblical characterizations is that we are not asked to believe in perfect or ideal people. Esther has to be persuaded to undertake her heroism: the brains behind the intrigue are those of her foster-father Mordecai. Moreover, when Esther has won her cause, she shows herself a perfect Judith for vengefulness; here we have a glimpse of historical forces acting through this beautiful Jewish girl. But how she tolls the imperial voluptuary along by one banquet after another; how skillfully the trap is laid for Haman, with his doom heavy over his head at the

second banquet, and the gallows standing fifty cubits high in the background! It is a great story—one of a multitude of treasures in that great compend called the Bible.

The ideas, the background of story and poetry, and, third, the style are the elements of the Bible that have made its great impression on the world-mind. Two or three specific things may be noted about the style of the King James version (the great qualities of which, by the way, are probably due in a large measure to Tyndale). One of these qualities is the happiness of phrase. How many of these expressions have so become a part of the language that you scarcely recognize them as biblical—"the fat of the land," "highways and hedges," "the fatted calf," "a thorn in the flesh," "heap coals of fire," "the sweat of his brow," "eat, drink, and be merry"? One of the stylistic features that is most impressive is the way a mighty surge of emotion is wedded to perfect simplicity of expression. I know no more emotional passage in literature than that cry of tormented Job which is the climax of the great poem bearing his name:

"But as for me I know that my Redeemer liveth,
And at last he will stand up upon the earth:
And after my skin, even this body, is destroyed,
Then without my flesh I shall see God;
Whom, I, even I, shall see, on my side,
And mine eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger . . .
My heart is consumed within me."

Again, the condensation, the conciseness, is a delight. See how Haman is disposed of. One of the

chamberlains had told of Haman's gallows fifty cubits high. "And the king said 'Hang him thereon.' So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified."

Part of the paramount influence of the authorized version upon English style in the three hundred years since its publication in 1611 is, of course, due to its use for devotions; but not all. Its sheer excellence is responsible for much of that influence. It has molded the style of some of our greatest writers. Lincoln's favorite reading as a boy was in the Bible, Bunyan, Æsop, Weems, and a law book; and he could repeat whole chapters of the Bible from memory. Nobody can read the greater passages in his speeches without recognizing the Biblical tone. Bunyan, also named as a Lincoln favorite, gained practically all the education he had from the Bible, and his style is integral with it. Whitman's verse is modeled upon that of the Old Testament; practically all his peculiarities, all his stylistic excellencies, are traceable to that great fountainhead. I might go on to speak of many of the masters of style: it is common practice to refer any great style to the Bible and Shakespeare. Conversely, we may allow the dictum of Coleridge that "intense study of the Bible will keep any writer from being vulgar in point of style."

I think I have said enough to convince any ambitious reader that if he would acquaint himself with the best in life and letters he must read the Bible. How should he go about it? By reading a

chapter a day from Genesis through to Revelations? By looking up texts from a concordance? I think not. The sincere reader of the Bible, the reader who wishes to come at the ideas and feelings that the Bible has for him, must begin by separating out from the unfortunate chapter-verse arrangement of the Scriptures the various pieces—the poems, short stories, essays, and other separable parts of the great anthology of the sacred writings. Ordinarily it is not wise in reading to begin by studying form, but it happens that the Bible, the various books of which originally had no divisions whatever of sentence, paragraphs, or chapters, has been divided for liturgical purposes into arbitrary and sometimes illogical divisions, with inadequate headings. Poetry, moreover, which is difficult enough to render from one language to another, is not always translated poetically, and in the authorized version is not printed in broken lines. Or a prose essay starts off without introduction and is printed as though it were connected with the verses that precede it. Now, to get the full literary power of these writings—that is, to understand and feel them fully—we must consider them as separate pieces. This is the only possible way to give literary consideration to the Bible; and let me say that there can be no thorough understanding of the Bible without consideration of literary purposes. He has too mean a conception of literature who thinks literary art incompatible with the Word of God. When Divinity is clothed in words He is clothed in literary form, and to study the Bible is to study both form and content,

which are indissoluble and inseparable by any surgical operation. When we cut ourselves off from a perception of the emotional power that resides in literary form, we fail by that much to know what the Bible has for us. But Professor R. G. Moulton in his valuable *Literary Study of the Bible*, alleges that "the vast majority of those who read the Bible have never shaken off the mediæval tendency to look upon it as a collection of isolated sentences, isolated texts, isolated verses. Their intention is nothing but reverent, but the effect of their imperfect reading is to degrade a sacred literature into a pious scrap-book." Let me add here, by the way, that no consideration of the Bible which is not entirely reverent can be profitable.

Let us look at the book of Job from the standpoint of form. It begins with a prologue in prose (Chaps. 1-2) in which the scene is first in heaven, then on earth, then in heaven again, and once more on earth. Then comes Job's curse in poetical form (Chap. 3) as an introduction to the three cycles of speeches in verse, each composed of speeches by each of the "comforters" and a reply from Job (Chaps. 4-14, 15-21, 22-31) all constructed with striking orderliness except for the third cycle, the irregularities of which are obviously due to corruptions in the text. Then comes the irruption of Elihu (Chaps. 32-37), after which God speaks out of the whirlwind (Chaps. 38-42:6). Then we have the prose epilogue which brings the story to a close (Chaps. 42:7-42:17). In Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Ecclesiasticus there are long con-

nected passages which are in effect essays, as well as the collections or "clusters" of proverbs and maxims. We have, too, in the Bible, short stories like Ruth, Esther, Jonah, and Tobit; hymns of devotion, as in the Psalms; war-songs; folk-songs; pæans of victory, like that of Deborah; love-lyrics, as in the Song of Songs; elegies, as in the Book of Lamentations, Job, and the Psalms; national anthems, as in Psalm 136; odes and antiphonal hymns; acrostics; orations, like those of Moses in Deuteronomy, or Joshua's farewell address to Israel; sermons, like those of Paul and Peter; biographies, like that matchless one of Joseph in Genesis; parables; prayers; visions; histories; genealogies; laws; statistics—in short, a great library of literature in which many, many literary types are represented,—all fused and unified to be sure by a great passionate purpose and idea, but nevertheless diverse in their elements.

The reader who finds himself dismayed by this great mass of material cannot do better than to provide himself with Professor Moulton's *Modern Readers' Bible*, where the resources of typography are utilized in order to make the various divisions clear.

This brings up the matter of editions and translations. I own to a preference for the American Revision, which keeps the virtues of the King James version, with a more adequate translation, illuminating folio headings, and a proper printing of verse. Yet in certain passages we resent any alteration of the "authorized" version; and on the other hand there is a fine vividness and reality

gained by the translations into modern idiom, as that of the *Twentieth Century New Testament* and the new Goodspeed translation. These idiomatic virtues seem to me to be more effective in narrative than anywhere else.

As to commentaries, the use for them is two-fold: first, to aid in the literary division I have insisted upon; and, second, to aid in the historical reconstruction of Biblical society and politics. Textual criticism is a highly specialized science the results of which the reader of Biblical literature may enjoy but in which he need not participate. No more does he need exegesis of a homiletical nature. But the reader who is unacquainted with an ancient civilization whose literature he is reading may always profit by some good book on the subject. Let me add here an observation which I have made before in the course of these essays: to know intimately any great civilization besides our own is in itself a liberal education.

Finally, I would suggest the employment of the correlation-of-arts method urged in connection with the reading of history. If you are reading the book of Esther, for example, take up in connection with it Racine's play *Esther*, which has been well translated by John Masefield; study also Handel's musical setting of the story, and the pictures of Esther before Ahasuerus by Barrias, Steen, or W. L. Taylor. The Tissot Bible Pictures are helpful in any Bible study.

The emphasis upon the reading of the Bible in the past has been of inestimable value. The modern reader who carelessly allows himself to

fall into the habit of viewing this great work lightly is making a disastrous mistake. No reader can afford to neglect the Bible.

BOOK LIST XIV

In the final pages of Wood and Grant's *The Bible as Literature* will be found a brief and excellent book-list.

Clements, Clara E., *The Bible in Art* (2 vols.). Doran.
Driver, S. R., *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*. Scribner.

Fosdick, H. E., *Modern Uses of the Bible*. Macmillan.
Gardiner, J. H., *The Bible as Literature*. Scribner.

Hastings, Jas., and others, *Dictionary of the Bible* (5 vols.; also a 1 vol. edition). Scribner.

Kent, C. F., *A History of the Hebrew People*. Scribner.

Mathew, Shailer, *A History of the New Testament Times in Palestine*. Macmillan.

McAfee, Cleland B., *The Greatest English Classic*. Harper.

Moore, Geo. F., *The Literature of the Old Testament*. Holt.

Moulton, R. G., *The Literary Study of the Bible*. Heath.

Moulton, R. G., and others, *The Bible as Literature*. Crowell.

Phelps, W. L., *Reading of the Bible*. Macmillan.

Smith, G. A., *A Historical Geography of the Holy Land*. Macmillan.

The Bible for Home and School (for commentary). Armstrong, N. Y.

The Modern Reader's Bible. Macmillan.

The New Testament, trans. E. J. Goodspeed. University of Chicago Press.

The Twentieth Century New Testament. Revell.

- Tissot Bible Pictures.* (Old or New Testament.) 416
Lafayette St., N. Y.
- Weiss, B., *A Manual of Introduction to the New Testament.* Funk & Wagnalls.
- Wood, I. F., and Grant, Elihu, *The Bible as Literature.*
Abingdon Press.
- Work, Edgar W., *The Bible in English Literature.*
Revell.

XV. A PARABLE

While in every other respect I feel the infirmities of old age, in my studies it seems to me that I grow younger every day. Therefore I shall be glad if Death come upon me while I am engaged in reading or writing.

Petrarch.

Grandpa Korner is an old man. It is many years since he retired from business, with just enough property to take care of his simple needs. He lives in a little house on the edge of town with a widowed sister some ten years younger than he. On sunshiny days he sits out on the south side of the house, his thin form huddled in a rocking-chair more ancient than Grandpa Korner himself, his straggling white beard spread upon his buttoned-up, faded old coat. There he sits and smokes his pipe, and sits and smokes.

Sometimes I drop in for a chat with him. He looks up at me with his little eyes of watery blue, and takes his pipe from his mouth with a shaking hand to talk to me in his thin, tremulous voice.

"I'm gittin' old," he quavers. "I'm gittin' old. Nothin' to do but jist set here, and smoke a little. And maybe think a little about things. And maybe jist set."

"But you read sometimes, don't you, Grandpa?" I asked him once.

"Never was much of a hand to read," he an-

swered. "Seems like I never put my mind to it. . . . Never had time, I guess."

"But now you have time I should think you'd want to read. I'll bring you over some books—"

"No, no," he protested, with a helpless fluttering of his hands. "It ain't no good now. Almiry reads a little to me sometimes, but I kind o' drap off. I'm gettin' old, an' a old man ain't wuth anything. Jist to be shoved around—an' set out in the sun. . . . Ain't nothin' for me but to die, I guess. . . . I'm gittin' old."

.

More frequently I pay a visit to Uncle Thomas Frisbie, who lives in a little cottage at the other end of town. Uncle Thomas is of about the same age as Grandpa Korner, and he too has devoted most of his life to business, and is now feeble and impecunious. I have spent some very pleasant hours in the little Frisbie sitting room, which is neatly kept by Uncle Thomas' spinster daughter. There is a rag carpet on the floor, and crocheted "tidies" on the backs of the rocking-chairs. In one corner is a little home-carpentered bookcase: I could tell you the names of most of the faded books on its shelves, for I seldom pass a bookcase without pausing to read the titles on the backs of the books. I doubt if there is such a variety of literature in any other bookcase so small as this! Byron and Scott and Wordsworth; *Don Quixote*; Pope's Homer; *Tristram Shandy* standing next Emily Dickinson (what an interesting juxtaposition!); a little row of school texts of Shakespeare;

Ethan Frome, Turgenev's *Sketches of a Huntsman*, and Mary E. Wilkins' *People of our Neighborhood*; Emerson and Montaigne; Plato's *Republic*; Cellini, Plutarch, Boswell, and Pepys; two or three volumes of O'Brien's *Best Short Stories*—these are a few of the books on those modest shelves. A worn Bible lies on the center-table.

"I didn't make much in business, after all," Uncle Thomas told me once, looking up at me over the tops of his spectacles, and shaking his white head. Then a quizzical smile emphasized the wrinkles in his thin old face, and he added, "Thought sometimes I was going to make a fortune! But the lean years came along and ate up the fat ones: so it went. But I have this little house and enough to get along on, I guess—and these books! Really, the books are enough; they make up for everything. I reckon all the rest wouldn't amount to much without the books. I was reading this morning—"

And so he would launch into discussion of something in Montaigne, who was a great favorite of his, or his face would light up beneath his shock of white hair as he related an anecdote from Plutarch.

Ordinarily I am stingy about lending books, but I love to lend them to Uncle Thomas, especially the new ones—Quick's Iowa trilogy, Stevens' *Paul Bunyan*, the poems of H. D., Anderson's *A Story Teller's Story*. Uncle Thomas always repays me with some acute criticism. "This fellow Anderson," he said once, "makes me think of poor old Stephen Blackpool in Dickens' *Hard*

Times, you know. He was always saying, 'It's all a muddle! It's all a muddle!' I guess that's what Anderson thinks."

One other remark of Uncle Thomas' I am going to quote. "I hope I can live for twenty years more, son," he said to me one afternoon. (Any young man is "son" to him). "Life gets richer and fuller as a fellow goes on."

XVI. CONCLUSION

Five pieces of advice may be reiterated once more as we come to the end of these conversations about reading.

First, read widely. The chief end of reading is to enlarge one's horizon, and the reader who cultivates highly restricted literary sympathies defeats that end. He becomes a bigot in taste and a snob in literature.

Second, read aloud as much as possible. I have insisted throughout this volume upon this alliance of word and voice, because the eye-word is, after all, only a dim shadow of the spoken word; and because, if a reader is to get the full flavor and strength of such things as tone-color, rhythm and rhyme, with all their emotional effects, he must hear the words spoken by himself or another.

Third, think of books in terms of personality. "Whoso touches this book," roared Walt Whitman, "touches a man!" He was referring to his *Leaves of Grass*, but he might have said the same of any good book.

Fourth, be independent, leaning as little as may be on commentators. After all, one sometimes realizes a work better when he understands it less. Or as Coleridge says regarding poetry, it sometimes "gives more pleasure when only generally and not perfectly understood." Certainly no works of literature were written to be read by

the help of notes, and only those from which we are a long way removed in time and spirit, need such elucidation.

Fifth, read for your own pleasure. Not for ignoble gratification indeed—not for mere thrills—but for that high pleasure which is genuinely cultural.

“No profit grows where no pleasure is taken.

In brief, sir, study what you most affect.”

If it is retorted that this advice is in conflict with my “firstly,” I would point out that my ideal is to enjoy widely; and I believe that to be the true cultural purpose.

Mrs. Browning puts this matter of enjoyment in reading very well. Her words seem almost a reiteration of certain counsels of Montaigne. She says:

“We get no good

By being ungenerous, even to a book,
And calculating profits—so much help
By so much reading. It is rather when
We gloriously forget ourselves, and plunge
Soul-forward, headlong, into a book’s profound,
Impassioned for its beauty, and salt of truth—
'Tis then we get the right good from the book.”

We have wandered in these chapters through an exceedingly large and varied garden. We have not stopped to analyze or study the plants, to learn of their growth or development, or even to enjoy their beauty. We have caught but fleeting glimpses here and there, for our aim was not really to do more than learn a little of where to

find this or that odor, charm, attraction, so that when we should come back to-morrow we might gather our herbs and pluck our bouquet. Therefore I am very anxious that you shall return to-morrow. The garden is a place of delight—a place of manifold delights.

I end then upon the note upon which I began,—that literature is to be enjoyed, not studied; that it is to give us pleasure rather than instruction. And thus bringing us joy, it will instruct us more effectually than a schoolmaster with ferrule and birch rod; and giving us pleasure, it will also give us wisdom. So may it be.

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